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Arab-Israeli Talks

No 'tangible results' were achieved in talks with the Israeli team—either by the Jordanian or Palestinian delegations, Amman radio reported. Both delegations blamed Israel's refusal to discuss the issue of settlements or a withdrawal from the occupied territories. Meanwhile, the head Syrian delegate asserted that the present round of talks was useless since the Israeli delegation had "no authority to make progress" prior to the upcoming elections. Muwaffaq al-'Allaf made the statement in an unprecedented interview with the Israeli paper DAVAR. Meanwhile, the head Israeli delegate to the talks with Lebanon acknowledged that a "standoff" existed between the two parties, Jerusalem radio noted.

Iran

In its budget for the new Iranian year beginning on 21 March, the government has allotted $1.1 billion for its nuclear program, the German paper DIE WELT disclosed on 27 February. The paper also cited Western intelligence sources as saying that Tehran has dispatched several "headhunters" to recruit nuclear scientists and technicians from the former Soviet republics, allegations which the Iranian leadership has denied.

Iraq

President Saddam Husayn paid a "surprise visit" to the city of al-Kut in Wasit Governorate, Baghdad radio reported. Recalling past riots that occurred in the governorate, the Iraqi leader urged local officials to maintain open communication channels with the public and to strive to meet their basic needs.

Lebanon

President Ilyas al-Hirawi was said to be in "good" condition after undergoing a "simple surgical operation" on 28 February, Beirut radio disclosed. Meanwhile, in an interview with the daily AL-SAFIR, Lebanese Shiite leader Shaykh Fadlallah said the recent assassination of Shiite cleric 'Abbas al-Musawi is part of a systematic U.S.-Israeli campaign to "hunt down" those responsible for holding Western hostages in Lebanon, AFP reported.

Palestinian Affairs

PLO leader Yasir 'Arafat and Yemeni President 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih praised the U.S. position toward Israel on settlements and loan guarantees as a "good step," Sanaa Voice of Palestine stated. The two leaders met in Yemen on 27 February. In another development, the PLO denied having information implicating either "a Middle Eastern state" or "a Palestinian party" in the Lockerbie affair, Paris Radio Monte Carlo reported, citing the Tunisian magazine AL-HAQA'IQ.

Inter-Arab Affairs

ARABSAT successfully launched its third satellite from French Guyana on 27 February aboard an Ariane-4 rocket, Riyadh SPA reported. The satellite has 8,000 channels and will be put to "commercial use," according to the Saudi Post, Telephone, and Telegraph minister.

Algeria

The government signed an agreement with France that will enable it to receive credits worth 5 billion francs, Algiers TV announced.

Bangladesh

The government established diplomatic relations with the Ukraine Republic, according to Dhaka Radio.

Arab-Israeli Talks

DAVAR Reviews Positions of Arab, Israeli Teams

TA2802113592 Tel Aviv DAVAR in Hebrew 28 Feb 92 pp 1, 2

[Report from Washington by Dan Avidan]

[Text] Muwaffaq al-'Allaf, head of the Syrian delegation for the Washington peace talks, said yesterday that at the end of the current round of talks (this coming Wednesday) the Syrian Government will make an overall evaluation of the state of the negotiations and, if it becomes apparent that no progress has been made, the Syrians might quit the talks.

Initially, the Syrians will ask the United States to increase its involvement in the negotiations significantly in order to pull them from the dead end they are about to reach. Al-'Allaf said that so far no progress has been made in the negotiations between Israel and the Arab partners: Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and the Palestinians.

According to him, the stalemate in the discussions is the result of Israel's refusal to agree that, regarding Israel's withdrawal from the territories, UN Resolution 242—on which the negotiations are founded—applies to the Golan Heights as well.

In response to the DAVAR correspondent's question of whether the Syrians will agree to sign a peace contract with Israel if it accepts the principle of withdrawal from the Golan, al-'Allaf said that "the minute Israel seriously accepts the principle of withdrawal, we will be willing to accept all the demands and characteristics of peace that you mentioned." This was the first time the Syrians allowed Israeli correspondents to address questions to the head of the Syrian delegation in Washington, after verifying they were Israelis.

Al-'Allaf said the Syrians feel that this time the Israelis came for the negotiations with no authority to make progress because of the upcoming elections in Israel. He made it understood that President al-Asad is beginning to feel uneasy about the Syrian public because, after four months of direct negotiations with Israel's representatives, he has no achievements to show, while Israel continues its settlement activity and shows no readiness to withdraw in return for peace.

"It seems that the real purpose of the Israelis is to make the impression that they are negotiating with the Arabs, while using this to continue their expansionist and suppressive policies, both inside and outside the territories. We will not be able to live with that for long," al-'Allaf said.

He accused the Israelis of avoiding a discussion of substantial issues and of twisting the meaning of Resolution 242, which calls for a withdrawal from the territories in return for peace between Israel and the Arabs. According to him, the Israelis again raised "irrelevant" issues, such as the question of the Syrian Army's presence in Lebanon, the situation of the Syrian Jews, and the demand that Syria first recognize Israel's legitimacy.

Al-'Allaf said Israel justifies its continued presence on the Golan by claiming that it was conquered in a defensive war and therefore it should in no way be returned to Syrian sovereignty. He noted that the Syrians have refuted this claim with testimony by politicians and experts on international law, who stipulated that even if the Six-Day War was a defensive war, that does not justify annexing the Golan to Israel. He said that the Syrians quoted David Ben-Gurion, who said at the time that Israel's security will not be guaranteed by controlling territory, but by signing peace agreements with the Arabs.

Al-'Allaf also stated that Syria does not mind if progress is made on one front of the negotiations while other fronts are stalled, but it opposes signing separate peace agreements between Israel and each of the Arab countries and the Palestinians. According to him peace must be comprehensive. He presented a harsh position regarding the issue of the Syrian Jews, claiming that they enjoy equal status in Syria and that Israel has no right to intervene on their behalf. He also said that as long as Israel does not allow Palestinian refugees to return to their homes, it has no right to demand that Syrian Jews be allowed to leave.

Jordanian delegation spokesman Marwan al-Mu'ashshir said the Jordanian and Israeli delegations yesterday reached no agreement regarding the establishment of subcommittees as a means to advance the negotiations. The delegations again discussed an agenda, but no agreement was reached on that either. Jordan insists that, prior to an agreement on the agenda, it must be determined that there is a need for an Israeli withdrawal from the territories in return for peace, and that settlement activity be stopped. Only when those issues are agreed upon will normalization and signing a peace treaty with Israel be discussed.

[Washington-based correspondent Ori Nir reports on page A1 of Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew on 28 February that "Israeli and Jordanian experts on economy, legal issues, and health yesterday held informal conversations in an attempt to determine an agenda for the discussions of their respective delegations in Washington." Nir adds that "this has been the only real progress reported by Israeli and Arab spokesmen."]

Al-Mu'ashshir added that although problems exist, the negotiations are not at a dead end, and Jordan wants to keep them going. At present, Jordan has no intention of calling for a more substantive U.S. involvement in the negotiations. (Nevertheless, the heads of all Arab delegations briefed State Department officials, headed by Baker's aide Edward Djerejian, on the state of negotiations and the lack of progress in the talks).

The Jordanian spokesman said it is possible that the Jordanians will make progress faster than the other Arab

parties, but, in any event, they will not sign a separate peace accord with Israel. He lashed out at Israel's claim that the issue of withdrawal from the territories was completed with its pullout from the Sinai.

According to him, this is the main obstacle to the peace process. He stated that Jordan does not feel that any Arab party intends to quit the negotiations, despite the difficulties. If there is a dead end, Jordan will ask the Americans to take a stand, he said

The Israeli-Palestinian talks have, in fact, reached an impasse because of the gap between the parties' polar stands regarding the essence of the transitional arrangements in the territories. Over the past two days, the meetings of the Israeli and Palestinian delegations were very tense, and accusations were exchanged. The Israelis completely rejected the model the Palestinians presented (in the previous round of talks), which describes the establishment of a transitional arrangement in the territories. They claim that the Palestinians are actually demanding an Israeli withdrawal and the establishment of an independent Palestinian ruling authority which, in practice, will be an independent Palestinian state, even if it is not called that.

The Palestinian offer, called "A Model for the Establishment of a Palestinian Interim Self-Government Authority," speaks of holding elections under UN supervision and of the establishment of a 180- member legislative council and a 20-member executive council that would have the authority to impose laws on the settlers as well. This council would be the source of authority for the autonomy, which would apply to East Jerusalem as well. The offers speak of the establishment of a strong Palestinian police force, which will operate under international guarantees and with the assistance of UN forces, should the need arise.

To counter the Palestinian model, the Israelis presented their own two position papers, called "Ideas on Peaceful Coexistence in the Territories During the Transitional Period." The Israeli papers state that settlement activity will continue during the transitional period; that the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] will remain in the territories and will be the source of authority for Palestinian self-rule; that no elections will be held in the territories; that Palestinians will be incorporated into the (Israeli) Civil Administration, and will assume responsibility over issues such as agriculture, education, taxation, religious affairs, health, industry, tourism, and so on.

They will have authority to run legal affairs pertaining only to civilian and criminal issues. All security affairs and foreign relations will be in the hands of the Israelis—not the Palestinian—authorities.

Hanan 'Ashrawi called the Israeli offers a policy of apartheid—discriminating between the Palestinians and the settlers, who will continue to reside in the territories while enjoying the immunity of the Israeli judicial system.

Roundup Notes Negotiations To Resume 2 Mar

JN2802074592 Amman Radio Jordan Network in Arabic 0500 GMT 28 Feb 92

[Text] The bilateral Middle East peace talks between Arab and Israeli delegations will resume in Washington on Monday. The Jordanian and Palestinian delegations resumed their meetings yesterday without making any progress thanks to Israel's refusal to present answers on the issues of settlement and the complete Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories.

Jordanian spokesman Marwan al-Mu'ashshir said a call for U.S. intervention will dictate itself if a deadlock in the talks is reached; but this is not the case now, he added. The spokesman was satisfied that none of the parties are willing to abandon the peace process.

For her part, Palestinian spokeswoman Hanan 'Ashrawi said that she is waiting for, sooner or later, a greater U.S. commitment to the negotiations. She pointed out that no tangible results were achieved at the negotiations. She once again refused the Israeli working paper about autonomy in the occupied West Bank and Gaza, which was presented Monday.

Head of the Syrian delegation Muwaffaq al-'Allaf said that a request for the intervention of the sponsor of the conference will be discussed at the end of the current round of peace talks, on 4 March, if no progress is achieved before then.

Palestinian Response to Israeli Stand Reported

PLO Rejects 'Self-Government' Plan

LD2702231792 Tunis Tunisian Republic Radio Network in Arabic 2100 GMT 27 Feb 92

[Text] Mr. Yasir 'Abd-Rabbuh, the official in charge of information in the PLO Executive Committee, affirmed the complete Palestinian rejection of the Israeli plan for self-government in the occupied Palestinian territories which the Israeli negotiating delegation in Washington put forward. The Palestinian official considered that the plan works toward annexing the Palestinian territories to Israel, and cannot be considered a starting point for a peace dialogue.

'Tension' After Meeting With Israelis

TA2802061392 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0500 GMT 28 Feb 92

[Text] In Washington, the first week of this round of peace talks has ended. 'Oded Ben-'Ami, our correspondent in Washington, reports that there was tension after a working meeting between the Israeli and Palestinian delegations. The Palestinians charged that Israel is using terror against the inhabitants of the territories. Elyaqim Rubinstein, the head of the Israeli delegation, quoting Golda Meir, said that we will never forgive the Arabs for forcing us to send our sons to shoot. In the meeting itself, Dr. 'Ezra Sadan presented Israel's position on the

economy of the self-government and the economic ties between Israel and the territories during the transitional period.

The heads of the Jordanian and Israeli delegations conferred with Edward Djerejian, who is charge of Middle East affairs in the State Department, on the venue for the next round of talks, but did not reach an agreement.

Delegate al-Agha on Shamir, Rabin

NC2802081992 (Clandestine) Radio Free Lebanon in Arabic 0545 GMT 28 Feb 92

[Dispatch from Michel al-Haj in Washington—recorded]

[Excerpt] [passage omitted] To clarify the Palestinian camp's policy, Radio Free Lebanon interviewed delegation member Zakariya al-Agha, who said his team was determined to confront Jewish settlement in the occupied territories. He added: This stand is the pillar of our strategy because this issue has become the core of American demands, about which Washington is as concerned as it is about the peace march.

On current Israeli policy, he said that the ruling party is trying to rally support by opposing the United States and rejecting all Palestinian proposals during the peace talks. In its statement, Yitzhaq Rabin's opposition attempts to gain Washington's support. Thus, Rabin is trying to tell President Bush's administration not to make any concessions to Shamir on the loans or other pending issues. He is also insinuating that if the Labor Party wins the elections, relations between Washington and Israel will improve.

On Palestinian evaluation of the two Israeli parties' stands on settlement and Palestinian autonomy, Dr. al-Agha said: We do not see any major difference between Rabin and Shamir because the two parties agree on their no's to the Palestinian state, no to full withdrawal, no to self-determination, and no to the PLO. He went on: The Labor Party's ambitions rest on a purely Jewish state. It does not want dual nationality and it claims that Rabin might withdraw from regions with Arab populations to avoid having a large Arab minority which might endanger his plans. Nevertheless, the Labor Party does talk about withdrawals, even partial, from the occupied territories.

Al-Agha said the Labor Party discusses its readiness to give the Palestinians autonomy, but who knows what its nature will be; it might be a reduction or easing-up in the existing occupation. This is the Likud policy, much the same as keeping the territories under their authority while telling the world that the Palestinians are running their own affairs. Their stands do not meet our ambitions.

Al-Agha added: Both parties see annexing regions to Jordan as a way to a federal solution to the Palestinian problem.

Concluding, Dr. al-Agha pointed out: The Palestinians are confused by Shamir's and Rabin's stands. Some say that it would easier to deal with Rabin and others that Rabin has the iron policy. Some say that fighting Shamir in front of world public opinion is easier because of his extremist stands. The world is not clear on the Labor Party stands, but if Rabin seriously accepts freezing settlements, partially or by stages, this would be a Palestinian gain.

Syrian Reports Describe Talks With Israelis

Israeli 'Falsehoods' Denounced

JN2702205292 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1915 GMT 27 Feb 92

[Text] Washington—During today's session of talks, the Syrian Arab delegation to the peace talks with the Israeli side submitted the Syrian political interpretation of UN Security Council Resolution 242, substantiated by arguments and evidence supplied by international quarters and renowned intellectuals and politicians rebutting the distorted political visualization of this resolution.

Following today's session, Muwaffaq al-'Allaf, head of the Syrian Arab delegation, announced that the Syrian delegation had also replied to the falsehoods the Israeli side had raised during yesterday's session; falsehoods which have no direct link to the essence of the talks. Al-'Allaf added that he affirmed in today's session the need to restrict the talks to discussion of substantive issues when they resume on Monday.

Al-'Allaf is expected to hold a news conference this afternoon, Washington time, in which he will explain what has taken place during the four sessions of talks in this round.

Al-'Allaf and the members of the Syrian Arab delegation met European Troika representatives at the Syrian delegation's place of residence. The Troika delegation comprises representatives of Portugal, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and a representative from the EEC. Al-'Allaf briefed the delegation on what has taken place so far during this session of talks.

Israeli Elections Cause 'No Progress'

JN2702215492 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 2125 GMT 27 Feb 92

[Text] Washington—Muwaffaq al-'Allaf, head of the Syrian Arab delegation to the peace talks, has announced that the peace process is threatened with collapse because of the Israeli side's insistence on obstructing any progress in the talks, and its exploiting of the peace process as a cover for its repressive practices, provocations, aggressions, and settlement policy in the region. At a press conference this afternoon, al-'Allaf said: The

Israeli side came to these talks with premeditated determination not to allow any progress. He added: The first week of the fourth round of these talks, which ended today after holding four sessions, achieved no progress.

Al-'Allaf said: We would have said that the reason for this was the Israeli election campaign, had it not been for the fact that this was not the first time in which the talks did not produce any progress. He added: I believe that preventing any progress in the peace process constitutes a constant objective for the Shamir government which only seeks—from this process—to sit with the Arabs at the negotiating table, to delude people into thinking that a peace process is going on, and at the same time, to continue its repressive measures against the Arab citizens inside and outside the occupied territory.

More on al-'Allaf Press Briefing

JN2802075292 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 0515 GMT 28 Feb 92

[Excerpt] Washington—[passage omitted] In his press conference, Muwaffaq al-'Allaf said that whenever the Israeli side was pushed by the Syrian delegation to discuss substantive issues, the Israeli side dealt with these issues in a twisted and distorted manner and in a way that shows that Israel's real objective is not to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the region, but to find a way to employ the peace process as means to give legitimacy to their occupation of Arab territories.

Al-'Allaf said: Throughout the talks, the Israeli side has not given any indication that they accept the principle of land for peace, which, together with UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, constitute the basis for the peace process.

Al-'Allaf stressed that Israel cannot continue to deceive the world by claiming it desires peace, while, at the same time, working to prevent any progress with the Arab delegations—Syrian, Lebanese, Palestinian, and Jordanian—in these talks, which seek to achieve that peace.

He said: We believe it is about time for the world community and the peace conference cosponsors to rescue the peace process, which will be facing a threat if it continues the way it is now.

Al-'Allaf warned the Israeli side against misinterpreting the continued Arab participation in the talks. He stressed that the Arab side cannot go on indefinitely in these talks, which Israel wants to utilize to give legitimacy to its occupation of the Arab territories it occupied in 1967 and to delude the world into believing that it really seeks peace.

Asked if the conference cosponsors will be officially asked to rescue the talks from collapse, al-'Allaf said: There is still no need to make such a formal request. But, if the current round of talks were about to finish without achieving any results, then I think the Arab side will not hesitate to ask the conference cosponsors to fulfill the role they pledged in the letters of invitation to the peace conference; a role which dictates that they be the catalyst in the peace process and interfere in substantive issues. [passage omitted]

Jordanian Delegation's Stance at Talks Noted

Lack of Progress With Israel Seen

JN2702200692 Amman Jordan Television Network in Arabic 1800 GMT 27 Feb 92

[Salim 'Ali Dhiyab dispatch from Wasaington]

[Text] The Jordanian and Israeli delegations resumed their meetings in Washington today without achieving any progress, because of Israel's refusal to present answers on the issue of settlements and the complete Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Arab territory.

Jordanian sources told us that Jordan insists that what is being discussed at the talks should be in line with the Israeli practices on the ground, and that the principle of withdrawal does not tolerate explanation or interpretation as Israel requests through the formation of committees. The Jordanian sources added that work should be done to implement Resolution 242 and that Israel should accept the principle of complete withdrawal. Jordanian delegation sources added that the principle of forming committees to interpret Resolution 242 is an Israeli attempt at bypassing this resolution. The essence of this resolution is clear; what Jordan calls for is also clear; and work should be done on this basis, the sources added.

With regard to the settlements, which Jordan believes must stop because of their negative effect on Jordanian national security and economy as well as on pan-Arab security, Israel refuses to halt the building of these settlements. Therefore, Jordan believes that the continuation of these settlements is a major obstacle to the peace process. Jordanian delegation sources added that Israel wants to delude the world into thinking that there is progress in the talks, to satisfy the international political forces calling for peace. At the same time, Israel does not present on the ground any real concessions.

The meeting between the Jordanian and Israeli delegations at the U.S. State Department is still in session.

The Palestinian and Israeli delegations concluded their third meeting yesterday evening. Big differences still exist between Palestinian and Israeli interpretations of autonomy and other issues.

[Begin Palestinian Advisory Council member Faysal al-Husayni recording] This time, Israel embarked on an attempt to respond to the plan presented by the Palestinians. The response, as usual, was negative. They attempted to present some proposals, which not only entrench the current situation, but—if we look at them thoroughly—will also deprive us of some powers which we were able to impose during the occupation period. [end recording]

Jordanian chief delegate Dr. 'Abd-al-Salam al-Majali received at his place of residence in Washington yesterday a delegation representing the EC. Al-Majali explained to them the Jordanian concept of the peace process and its major essence, which proceeds from exchanging land for peace through the implementation of Resolution 242.

[Begin recording] [Al-Majali] The EC asked for this meeting in our capacity as the negotiating delegation in the Jordanian-Israeli track. I explained to them the progress achieved, the problems facing us, the methods used, and the hope that we will have substance in these talks, hoping that we will achieve success and progress on the path of peace.

[Dhiyab] Dr. al-Majali, does the EC have specific ideas to support the peace process in general?

[Al-Majali] Of course, they are genuine partners in the multilateral conference. They were present in the first conference in Madrid, and in the third conference in Moscow. They play a major role in this issue, but through the multilateral conference. Europe will be the venue for the various committees which stemmed from the Moscow conference. [end recording]

Delegation Head Views Prospects

TA2802095792 Tel Aviv DAVAR in Hebrew
28 Feb 92 p 16

["Exclusive" interview with Dr. 'Abd-al-Salam al-Majali, head of the Jordanian delegation to the peace talks, by Dan Avidan in Washington on 26 February]

[Avidan] You are now in the midst of the discussions with the Israeli representatives on the establishment of joint committees aimed at advancing the talks. What is behind the idea of the committees?

[Al-Majali] The aim, first of all, is to set up a committee to reach Israeli-Jordanian understanding on the meaning of Resolution 242. We have been talking for some time about the need to implement the resolution, but we are divided on its meaning. Israel claims the resolution does not obligate it to any additional withdrawal beyond its withdrawal from the Sinai. We claim that the resolution obligates Israel to withdraw from all the territories and that all aspects of the resolution should be implemented. We have not yet reached an understanding on the matter, and therefore we proposed setting up a committee made of several members of each side to try to propose practical steps to overcome the dispute. I believe such a small group of people would find it easier to discuss this dispute—and issues like settlements and implementing the Geneva conventions in the territories—than would a large group.

The appointed committee will probably have three representatives from each side and will continue to consult with the delegation. Right now, there is only agreement in principle on the establishment of the committee, and its implementation has not been discussed at all. From our point of view, the committee must decide on the principle of withdrawal from the territories based on Resolution 242. Only after its establishment will it be possible to set up additional committees on issues pertaining to normalization of relations between the two countries. The committee must also approve the principle of Israeli withdrawal from territories inside the Green Line where the border was adjusted in Israel's favor, such as in the 'Arava, Aqaba, and Agan Naharayim.

[Avidan] It is generally believed that Jordan is the most avid Arab partner for peace talks and that faster progress can be made with it than with the other Arab partners. Is that right?

[Al-Majali] The Palestinians are interested in peace no less than the Jordanians, and that is also true for the Lebanese and Syrians. For the Syrians, however, peace is less pressing than for the other Arab parties. [as published] The Golan Heights is not a vital region for Syria from an economic viewpoint; the Golan does not have natural resources. For the Palestinians, on the other hand, it is urgent to get Israel out of the territories (Palestine) and for Lebanon to get an Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon. The Syrians are interested in regaining sovereignty over the Golan Heights, and that is why they are participating in the negotiations. They have serious intentions of making peace with Israel, just as Jordan does.

[Avidan] There are those in Israel who doubt that and claim that al-Asad is prepared to sign only a nonbelligerency agreement with Israel if withdraws from the Golan Heights and the other territories.

[Al-Majali] That is incorrect. I am convinced that al-Asad is ready to make full peace with Israel, but the price must be an Israeli withdrawal from the territories. There can be no peace without withdrawal. Over the years, Israel demanded that the Arabs be more pragmatic. It wanted them to recognize Resolution 242, and they did. Afterward it demanded that we declare that we accept Israel as a country in the region, and we did that as well. You asked that the PLO accept 242, and it did. You demanded that we come to the multilateral talks in Moscow, and we came. Israel, on the other hand, has made no gesture whatsoever to the Arabs. It has always taken and not given. You wanted direct negotiations without the intervention of the superpowers, and that has now also come about. Israel has so far not given anything in return.

Peace can be built only on the basis of the feeling that both sides come out victors, and not on the basis that one is gaining and the other losing. We now ask Israel to recognize Palestinian rights, and in return it will receive recognition from the Arabs. The borders between it and the Arab states will be opened to trade, and it will gradually be received by the Arab world. Normalization

means that problems are solved, but relations cannot be normalized as long as the problems continue to exist.

[Avidan] In other words, Jordan will not set up normal relations with Israel as long as all the problems, including the Golan Heights, south Lebanon, and so forth, are not solved?

[Al-Majali] Israel is interested in signing with each Arab state a separate peace accord. You have peace with Egypt, but it is a cold peace, because there is no overall peace settlement. There must be an overall peace; otherwise it will be temporary.

[Avidan] Will Jordan agree to sign a peace treaty with Israel even if Syria and other Arabs do not sign peace settlements?

[Al-Majali] Jordan is ready to sign peace with Israel at the appropriate time, but on condition that it is clear that the other Arab sides have taken a path leading to the signing of peace accords with Israel. Israel, for some reason, always fears Arab coordination. It fears that the Arabs are strong when they are coordinated and can endanger Israel, but that is true only in a war situation. In aspiring for peace, the moderate Arabs have a positive influence on the extremist Arabs. For example, the pragmatic Arab states persuaded Syria to join the negotiations, and they are also influencing it not to leave them. Arrangements between Israel and each Arab state can perhaps be achieved separately, but I do not recommend it.

Nevertheless, the moment one Arab country makes progress in the negotiations with Israel, that will provide an incentive for the others to make progress. The Syrians will not slow down the speed with which Jordan makes progress in the negotiations. On the contrary, Jordan will encourage the Syrians to make progress in the negotiations, just as it is doing, because the Syrians also want peace.

Right now, there is an opportunity to achieve regional peace that might not come around again. The Arab mood is in favor of the peace process and its progress. That in itself is a large step forward. Israeli public opinion must give its leadership a peace mandate prior to the upcoming elections there.

[Avidan] Does the Jordanian Government expect the Labor Party to win the elections and Yitzhaq Rabin to form the next government in Israel?

[Al-Majali] I do not want to intervene in Israeli internal politics, but the Israeli public must push any leader who is elected to make real progress for peace.

[Avidan] Has the Jordanian Government already prepared plans for cooperation with Israel in various fields?

[Al-Majali] The government has plans for various joint projects. Jordan has a plan to solve the regional water problem through Israeli-Arab cooperation. There are plans for setting up joint installations to distill sea water and joint projects for the ports of Elat and al-'Aqabah and the entire Red Sea region. It is, however, still too early to talk about it before progress is made in the peace process, before settlement is stopped and steps are taken to build mutual trust. Israel must recognize, first of all, Jordan's water rights, and of course the principle of withdrawal from the territories. Then everything will start to move....

[Avidan] What status does Jordan give itself in the transitional accommodation in the territories, and how will it participate, if at all, in the negotiations on that arrangement?

[Al-Majali] In accordance with the invitations to the peace conference, we will negotiate with the Palestinians on the transitional accommodation. The discussion of Jordan's role in the transitional arrangement is up to us and the Palestinians. Israel and the Palestinians must first reach an understanding on the substance of the arrangement, and then the Palestinians and Jordanians will discuss Jordan's status in the transitional arrangement. We are prepared to help the Palestinians in many ways, because we will have a joint border during the transitional period and under the permanent settlement. When a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation is finally established, Jordan will be involved in the economy and education, the open bridges (across the Jordan River), and the politics in the West Bank. All that will be within the framework of the Jordanian-Palestinian confederation, and most of the residents of the territories will want the establishment of such a confederation, because there are close ties between the inhabitants of both banks—family ties and economic ties. A Palestinian state, when it is set up in the territories, will not be able to conduct its affairs on its own and will need help from Jordan.

[Avidan] There are those who claim Israel has no interest in reaching a peace treaty with Husayn because such a treaty would not strengthen his position for long, due to the opposition of fundamentalists in Jordan.

[Al-Majali] The Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan is not so extremist. The Likud is worse. The "Brothers" do not reject the idea of negotiations with Israel, but they claim that due to the positions of the Israeli Government, it will not be possible to bring about a withdrawal from the territories through negotiations. They therefore preach a different path, jihad. There is a democracy in Jordan, and if Israeli-Jordanian peace is signed, the parliament will have to approve it, which is more or less the case in Israel.

Israeli Delegate Comments on Talks With Lebanon

TA280207092 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0505 GMT 28 Feb 92

[Telephone interview with Dr. Yosi Hadas, director general of the Foreign Ministry and head of the team negotiating with Lebanon in Washington, by Me'ir Einstein—live]

[Text] [Einstein] Dr. Yosi Hadas in Washington, good evening.

[Hadas] Good morning.

[Einstein] Before you go to sleep, with your permission, I would like to ask what is happening in the talks with Lebanon.

[Hadas] We have been treading the same ground since both sides presented their positions. There is a standoff from which we have not succeeded in extricating ourselves, because the Lebanese approach is very restricted. They are demanding what they call an Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon, and then they say: We will wait until the others also make peace. The Israeli approach, however, is that we are prepared to discuss peace; we came to discuss bilateral peace between us and Lebanon. Within that framework we can discuss all the issues, including security arrangements and IDF [Israel Defense Forces] deployment north of our border in accordance with what is agreed upon in the talks on security and civilian issues.

[Einstein] Mr. Hadas, were last week's events in south Lebanon discussed in the talks?

[Hadas] They were raised at the start, but not very firmly. We started the talks with my presentation of why Israel, using its right to self-defense, was forced to act as it did. The Lebanese representative claimed that it violated agreements, but he said: We came here to negotiate peace, and we will continue.

[Einstein] Was it not somewhat strange to talk together while the guns were roaring on both sides?

[Hadas] We began to talk after the guns had fallen silent. In the earlier round, we told the Lebanese not only that we would use our right to self-defense against aggression, but that we would also carry out preemptive actions if we have information about intentions to attack us.

[Einstein] I would like to move on to another issue. You are also in charge of preparing the multilateral talks, and I understand you dealt with that in Washington this week. What is the current situation?

[Hadas] I held a series of meetings in the State Department, and for the first time with the Indian ambassador in Washington, because India has now formed diplomatic relations with us. Today I met with a Canadian representative and EC delegates. All showed interest in our position on continuing the multilateral talks. We agreed on setting up various working groups and on the dates for convening two groups—one for regional economic cooperation, which will convene in Brussels on 11 May, and the working group on refugees in Ottawa, Canada, on 13-14 May. We will meet early next week to decide on the dates for the three other groups. The locations are known: Washington, for regional security and arms control; Tokyo, for environment; and either Turkey or Austria for talks on water. We will decide that in the coming days.

Inter-Arab Affairs

Arab League Chief, Libyan Discuss Lockerbie

NC2602133192 Cairo Arab Republic of Egypt Radio Network in Arabic 1230 GMT 26 Feb 92

[Text] Arab League Secretary General Dr. 'Ismat 'Abd-al-Majid met today with Abu-Zayd 'Umar Durdah, secretary of the Libyan General People's Committee.

They discussed the latest developments in the crisis between Libya on one hand and the United States, France, and Britain on the other over the accusations of Libya's involvement in the explosions aboard an American plane and a French one.

Following the meeting, Abu-Zayd 'Umar said that he discussed with Dr. 'Abd-al-Majid the efforts to resolve the crisis and that he conveyed the Libyan leadership's appreciation for the constant efforts of the secretary general and the Arab League to contain the crisis and confront the accusations leveled against Libya. He also praised the Arab League's role and its clear support for Libya's right.

Arab League Chief Rules Out Arab Summit

NC2802090792 Cairo Arab Republic of Egypt Radio Network in Arabic 0800 GMT 28 Feb 92

[Text] Arab League Secretary General Dr. 'Ismat 'Abd-al-Majid has ruled out an Arab summit conference in view of Arab divisions. He emphasized that the circumstances should be right before an Arab summit can reach any conclusions which are useful to the Arab nation. He noted that unifying the Arab fold and patching up the crack caused by the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait need some time so that Arab countries can agree on how to tackle the mistakes and open a new chapter.

'Abd-al-Majid was speaking at a news conference in Sanaa following talks with Yemeni President 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih and Palestinian president Yasir 'Arafat, who is currently in Sanaa.

Commenting on the Middle East situation and the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Arab League secretary general said the Arabs showed wisdom and maturity when they opted to negotiate for peace and a Palestinian solution despite Israel's provocations and the difficulties of the peace process.

Communications Ministers Attend Arabsat Launch

LD2802090892 Riyadh SPA in English 1953 GMT 27 Feb 92

[Text] Guyana, Feb 27, SPA—The third Arab satellite was successfuly launched on Thursday from French Guyana, in South America. The satellite is carried by European rocket Ariane 4.

The ceremony marking the launch of ARABSAT was attended by Saudi Minister of Posts, Telegraphs and

Telephones 'Alawi Darwish Kayyal and several Arab communications ministers, from the member states of the Arab Space Communications Organization, which owns the satellite.

Kayyal told reporters that this successful launch was the fruit of massive efforts reflecting persistence in resuming the ARABSAT programme, which started seven years ago, to serve the Arab nation. He said the manoeuvres and measures taken to stabilize the satellite in its orbit, 36 km above the earth, would take approximately two weeks. He said that once this was done, the satellite's 8,000 channels would be put to commercial use.

The Saudi minister of posts, telegraphs and telephones thanked the custodian of the two holy mosques for his support of the project thanked everybody who exerted any effort to bolster the Arab satellite programme. [sentence as received]

Palestinian Affairs

Official Denies PLO Possesses Lockerbie Evidence

JN2702125092 Paris Radio Monte Carlo in Arabic 1200 GMT 27 Feb 92

[Text] A Palestinian official, Muhammad Dawud 'Awdah, alias Abu-Dawud, has denied that the PLO has a file implicating a Middle Eastern state or a Palestinian party in the Lockerbie incident involving a U.S. aircraft.

In an interview published today by the Tunisian magazine AL-HAQA'IQ, 'Awdah said: The Libyans are innocent, but we do not have a file that allows us to implicate any Middle Eastern or Palestinian party.

'Arafat, Yemen's Salih Meet, Laud U.S. Loan Stand

JN2702174492 Sanaa Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1600 GMT 27 Feb 92

[Text] Brother Lieutenant General 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih, chairman of the Presidential Council, received at his office today brother struggler Yasir 'Arafat, president of the state of Palestine, chairman of the PLO Executive Committee, and commander in chief of the Palestinian revolutionary forces.

Brother Yasir 'Arafat briefed the brother president on developments in the Palestinian issue in light of the ongoing negotiations in Washington to establish peace in the Middle East, the escalation of intifadah operations in the occupied Palestinian territories, as well as the Zionist intransigence manifested in the rejection of peace.

During the meeting discussion also focused on Arab developments and issues of interest to the Arab nation. The two leaders expressed their satisfaction with, and welcome of, the U.S. position as expressed by U.S. President George Bush and Secretary of State James Baker on refusing to grant loan guarantees to Israel to build new Zionist settlements in the occupied Arab territories. They noted that this position is a good step which reflects credibility in supporting the efforts for peace in the region.

The brother president asserted the constant stand of the Republic of Yemen in supporting the struggle of the Palestinian people to regain their legitimate national rights, primarily the struggle of the Palestinian people and their right to self-determination and to establish their independent state on their national soil.

The meeting was attended by brother 'Ali Ahmad al-Salami, member of the Consultative Council and Council of Representatives; brother Yahya Rabah, ambassador of the state of Palestine; and brother Abu-Humayd, commander of the Sabra camp.

Speaking to the Yemeni news agency SABA' upon his arrival in Sanaa yesterday evening, brother Abu-'Ammar [Yasir 'Arafat] explained that peace efforts always collide with Israeli hard-line positions, as expressed recently by Sharon prior to the beginning of the fourth round of the Washington negotiations when he said that there will be no exchange of land for peace. This is in addition to Israel's continued establishment of settlements, its acts of land confiscation, its treacherous attacks on Palestinian camps in southern Lebanon and on Lebanon's sovereignty, and the Zionist enemy's ugly crime of assassinating Hizballah Secretary General struggler Shaykh al-Musawi, all of which are in addition to the list of ugly, continuing crimes against our Palestinian people inside the occupied territories.

He pointed out that all this comes in spite of the goodwill demonstrated by Arab delegations in traveling to Washington, whether we are talking about the Palestinian, Syrian, Jordanian, or Lebanese delegations.

Brother Abu-'Ammar asserted that all these crimes, by which Israel is violating all the clauses of the Fourth Geneva Convention and human rights and UN resolutions, indicate that the Zionist enemy does not want peace and does not want to reach honorable solutions, and that it wants to swallow up more land to accommodate its new immigrants, who are forcibly being brought in from Russia and other countries.

Brother Abu-'Ammar added: Despite all this we will continue our efforts to expose the enemy to world public opinion for what it really is. He affirmed: This Palestinian, Syrian, Jordanian, and Lebanese position requires more Arab support so that we will not have to face the enemy individually but rather face it as one Arab nation.

Brother Abu-'Ammar was received at the airport by brother Ahmad 'Ali al-Salami, member of the Consultative Council; a number of officials; a representative of the Republic's presidency protocol office; brother Yahya Rabah, ambassador of the state of Palestine to Sanaa; and a number of Palestinian revolution cadres.

Algeria

France Provides 5-Billion-Franc Loan Guarantee

LD2702211692 Algiers ENTV Television Network in Arabic 1900 GMT 27 Feb 92

[Text] An agreement for credit guarantees worth 5 billion francs was signed in Paris today between the Algerian [Central] Bank and a number of French banks. The guarantees will enable Algeria to purchase a number of French products.

The agreement is the culmination of the accord reached between the Algerian and French Governments last September.

Ghozali Discusses Political, Economic Developments

LD2702182992 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in French 1818 GMT 26 Feb 92

[Interview with Prime Minister Sid Ahmed Ghozali by Abdelghani Toualbi on the "Forum-Alternation" program on 26 February; place not given—recorded]

[Excerpts] [Toualbi] Good evening, Mr. Ghozali. Welcome to our studio. Last Saturday you introduced a limited cabinet reshuffle which was approved by Mr. Boudiaf, chairman of the Higher State Council. Twenty-four or 48 hours later, a session of the ministers council was held during which a modified, indeed new, program of your government was examined and adopted. Apparently this new program looks more like an emergency plan, in view of the country's economic situation, than a plan for revival in the real sense. This is normal, we could say, in view of the circumstances. Having said that, some voices here and there are beginning to criticize this program for its renewal of a certain economic philosophy or approach nearer to the interventionism of the former era than to the policy of breaking with the past desired by so many in our country. Yet, you declared at your recent news conference that you totally adhere to the universal laws of a market economy. So, our first question is, where is the truth between these two hypotheses?

[Ghozali] First of all I would like to greet you and the listeners. I am happy with this new opportunity to address listeners through you. Going back to interventionism, I too have heard that, and I would like to inform you that following the statement that you quoted I arranged a tripartite meeting between the UGTA [General Union of Algerian Workers], the government, and private and state employers. At that meeting I said: Give me three examples in the program, in the government's action plan, that support somewhat this feeling that you have that we are returning to interventionism. The fact is that the people whom I asked, and who were among those who had made those statements, were unable to give three examples. Therefore, I believe that that is a judgment which has been made a bit too quickly, for these people made it even before they acquainted themselves with the government's action plan.

I insist on the fact that, first, it is not an emergency plan nor a revival plan but rather is the government's action plan. This government did have a plan of action, but as a result of our political events since 26 December and following the installation of the Higher State Council, the government was asked to review its plan. This is what we did, and we planned our action on the basis of what had already been launched and planned, but we rearranged the priorities and we put the emphasis back on a number of actions which seem likely, in the view of the government, to meet the current requirements.

Going back to the fundamental economic choices, at least as far as mine are concerned, these are the transformation of the economy, but really not in the politicking sense and not in the sense of the discourse which is not followed by implementation in the ground. We Algerians all noticed for a number of years that our economy is not functioning properly. It is not functioning properly because it has been hampered and because economic laws have been ignored. The task now is to restore these laws with what is universal and what is specific to a country like Algeria or any other country. I can assure you that my conception and the government's conception of the economy is absolutely not state intervention. I do not believe in it. I worked for 15 years in the public sector and while I was in charge of a large public company, that was absolutely not my conception either. On the contrary, I believe that during the 15 years that I headed Sonatrach [state hydrocarbon enterprise] I spent 50 percent of my time and 50 percent of my energy combating interventionism by the central administration because I believe that...

[Toualbi, interrupting] But you did adhere to the general economic policy of that time? You were one of the main driving forces.

[Ghozali] Absolutely; it was a stage which we went through. It was a stage which corresponded to a specific historical time, and it called for a second stage, for a qualitative leap. This is not contradictory. In the days following independence the state alone was in a position to rebuild a country that had been totally destroyed and where no public sector and no private sector existed. The only companies that existed then were foreign private companies operating in the oil sector. It is absolutely not contradictory that we thought of walking on our own two feet. I remember when I was minister of finance, Mr. Touabi. My first program here was with you and I explained then that my policy was to stay away from all postulates of an ideological nature and that the economy which interested me—a healthy economy and an economy that works well—was an economy that gives all agents, individuals, and enterprises, in both the public and private sectors, the possibility of fully exercising their creative capacities. This is the direction that I am taking. The creative capacities cannot be developed to

the full if they are directed, or in other words hampered by the central administration. [passage omitted]

[Toualbi] Do you think that with this reshuffle and the entry into your cabinet of some prominent figures like Said Guechi [former Islamic Salvation Front, FIS, official] and Nait-Djoudi [former Socialist Forces Front, FFS, official], the representative [political] currents, or at least the main ones, are today represented?

[Ghozali] No, I am not claiming that it is a government which has been set up as a kind of coalition or national union government. That is not the case.

[Toualbi] What is it then?

[Ghozali] What is certain is that it is a move in that direction. It is the expression, or at least was meant to be the expression, one more or less well understood, of the government's determination to give a concrete content to the appeal made, as soon as he arrived here, by the chairman of the Higher State Council, who said: I am extending my hand to all Algerians. That must not remain mere talk.

[Toualbi] So, in other words is this the start of a break [with the past]?

[Ghozali] It is a start. The break cannot be made with a mere cabinet reshuffle. First of all, limiting the break to this would be a big fraud or a big illusion.

[Toualbi] When do you think that the real break, which you personally advocate and of which you were one of the first supporters, will materialize?

[Ghozali] You will see for yourself as a citizen. You will see it when you will notice that more and more Algerians, who are generally recognized as being capable in carrying out their duties in terms of their competence and honesty, are occupying high and lower posts of responsibility. You will also see it in the government's determination to no longer overlook cases of squandering or misappropriation of public resources. But you will see this on the ground and not only through the appointment of six ministers and five state secretaries. By the way, I do not know why the spotlight has been focused on only two or three people and not the others. [passage omitted]

[Toualbi] If we take this reasoning a bit further, Mr. Ghozali, do you today favor a degree of privatization, of the public enterprises, naturally?

[Ghozali] I do not want to tackle the problem from a dogmatic angle. I know that the World Bank, the IMF, and even certain schools [of thought] advocate the privatization of enterprises as a good a priori solution; in other words, it is considered an a priori remedy. No.

[Toualbi] Is this the universal law of the market?

[Ghozali] Not at all. There are many countries which have not privatized public enterprises and where the law of the market is being employed to the fullest. I can give the example of France, Spain, or Italy, which have very significant public sectors and a complete market economy but which have not at all sought to solve their problems through the privatization that we are considering as a principle. What I reject...

[Toualbi, interrupting] But in an environment which is essentially and basically private, after all, in the case of France or Italy, for example.

[Ghozali] In an environment of a market economy, but all the more reason why did they not privatize. The ENI [Italian oil company] is a very important public group which has a turnover higher than Algeria's gross domestic product. [passage omitted]

I am not a monetarist. In any case, I am not sufficiently skilled in economics to belong to any school. Whether or not I am a monetarist, which I am not, as far as monetarism is concerned, it would be a mistake to establish it or introduce it as a dogma in our country. We do not even have the instruments to apply it effectively. We did try to follow some monetarist policies, but in the end it led to something which is on paper [as heard]. Do we have a bank network which is really capable of playing its role in mobilizing savings, and do you personally pay all your transactions by check? Do the companies use checks in all their (?operations). Some people are talking about creating a stock exchange, but what are the shares which can be quoted or exchanged on a stock exchange in Algeria? There are not any. Let us build the set first. [passage omitted]

[Toualbi] This naturally brings us to the point of these famous foreign loans which are, as one of our colleagues put it, taking a lot of persuading.

[Ghozali] The problem of foreign loans is linked to Algeria's balance of payments, or in other words a balance which is extremely unbalanced. This is reflected in a treasury crisis which has existed since 1987 and which went from bad to worse. This treasury crisis results from a major problem—Algeria's indebtness. The debt servicing, in other words what Algeria pays back [word indistinct] on its foreign debt, has reached an average of about 75 percent in the past six or seven years. I would like the public to know this.

[Toualbi] Including this year, Mr. Prime Minister?

[Ghozali] Including this year.

[Toualbi] And maybe next year too?

[Ghozali] It will depend on what we are going to do to improve currency reserves this year. As soon as the public knows that a country earmarks 25 percent of its external resources to service debt, this is when the problems start to get serious. You should know that our country has not only reached this 25 percent, but this increased to 75 percent, and this lasted for six years. The miracle is that our economy is not dead and buried. It is a unique case in the entire history of international debt.

There has never been a country which agreed to pay 75 percent of its resources for debt servicing. Why did we get to this point? Because we adopted in 1986 a policy aimed at resolving the problem of indebtness through additional debt. In other words, we tried to borrow in order to pay back. This is not a bad thing when it is not the sole element of a policy, but when it is the sole element of a policy it leads to bankruptcy. This is what happened to Algeria [words indistinct].

We also should have thought about increasing our own internal resources. We never did this and we started thinking about it last year when we modified the law on hydrocarbons to enable Sonatrach to develop further and better our oil and gas reserves. This law was approved [by the People's National Assembly], and it seeks the participation of several foreign oil companies in increasing production, in addition to an entry bonus. In other words, we ask a company to come and become a partner in developing a deposit—with Sonatrach remaining the majority holder—and in return for this association we ask the company to make an advance [words indistinct]. It is an advance, but it is an advance on our own resources. This is different from going to bankers and simply asking them to lend us some money.

[Toualbi] What has happened since the adoption of this law?

[Ghozali] The discussions have made progress and are continuing, for it is not a simple affair. We are asking foreign companies to commit themselves for 10 years and even 15 years and to pay in advance. As you can imagine, they cannot commit themselves rashly. At this stage the political context is taken into account. Therefore, these companies, which are interested in the offer by Sonatrach and which are negotiating with Sonatrach, will commit themselves when they feel that our country has truly returned to a credible situation at the political level and one of stability. [passage omitted]

[Toualbi] I know that in principle the judiciary is independent in our country, but if you will permit me this question: Where are we in the trial of Messrs. Abassi Medani and Ali Belhadj, the two leaders of the FIS?

[Ghozali] It is being examined, and I am not in a position—it is not my role or function; only the judge can do this—to make predictions, and I do not interfere in the affairs of the judiciary. I do not have the right to do so.

[Toualbi] Does the argument in the file for dissolving the FIS presented by the Interior Ministry, and therefore by your government, to the judiciary depend in one way or another or not at all on the trial of Abassi Medani and Ali Belhadj? Is the argument based on more recent facts [words indistinct]?

[Ghozali] The file is very serious, extremely serious. Let us not forget that, at least since Guemar [where security force members were attacked and killed by fundamentalists], the tragedy of Guemar, over 70 Algerians have been killed, over half of whom were Algerians in uniform, or in other words belonging to the National People's Army or to the civilian security service. Over 35 people from the security forces have been killed with bullets or knives, more often with bullets, and I am not counting the injured, some of whom suffered serious injuries. There have been scores of injured civilians, military personnel, and policemen. These events are the direct responsibility of FIS activists or FIS officials. I am not talking about the other violations of the law.

Therefore, the file is extremely serious. All these elements have been supplied by the government, which has started a legal case, and the judiciary will have to decide on the basis of this file. It is not simple. I mean, it is more than serious. It is extremely serious that a [political] party was guilty of such a serious thing and that it took the country to the brink of civil war.

[Toualbi] Without interfering in the affairs of the judiciary, do you think that there are sufficient charges against the FIS to have it dissolved fairly soon?

[Ghozali] I do not have to dictate to the judiciary what it should do, but would you as a citizen accept, or would you find it normal for a party to continue operating while at the same time, on the other hand, launching actions of a civil war? [passage omitted]

Further on Reform Efforts

LD2702222392 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in Arabic 1030 GMT 27 Feb 92

[Interview with Prime Minister Sid Ahmed Ghozali by unidentified correspondents on the "Mirror" program on 27 February—live or recorded]

[Excerpts] [Correspondent] Hello to our dear listeners everywhere. We welcome you to the "Mirror" program. We have the honor in today's episode of hosting Mr. Sid Ahmed Ghozali, the head of government after the new political circumstances witnessed by the country. He has previously been our guest. Welcome.

[Ghozali] Thank you, and may God's peace and blessings be upon you.

[Correspondent] Welcome to you, Your Excellency. This question is going to be somewhat long. Your Excellency the head of government, it is noticed in the activity of your government that in order to patch up your credibility—excuse my expression—you talked about free and clean elections, but they turned out to be not free or clean as you affirmed. You also prepared a general program for the government's activity which was approved by the National People's Assembly. It turned out that this program was not enough, and therefore you were entrusted with preparing an emergency program for an economic revival. You have carried out two cabinet reshuffles of your government since June. Do you not believe, Your Excellency the head of government, that the difficulty facing you is not only the deteriorating

economic and social situation but is also a failure in achieving political change, which is the demand on which the political class and civil society is focusing? If you please, Your Excellency the head of government.

[Ghozali] In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate, and may God's prayers and peace be upon God's prophet. I see that it is correct to differentiate between political and economic actions. I have said this from the start, when the cabinet was installed in June 1991. There is naturally a known economic situation, with the social difficulties resulting from it and also the moral crisis that has prevailed in this country for many years; these naturally were a result of policies. The economic and social situations have in turn led to political problems. I particularly insisted then on the problem of political legitimacy. This government was really formed on the program of organizing free and clean legislative elections before the end of the year. I had the opportunity after the first round to provide an analysis to the public in regard to events on 26 December [the first round of legislative elections]. I said then that the government made a promise and kept it, as the administration played its role and the government was honest.

Regrettably, the result was not what we had hoped for and it did not work out in the way for which we had so assiduously worked. I said this not to lessen the government's responsibility, because in any event, whatever the reason for the distortion of the election, the government is responsible at the end of the day. This is not to diminish the meaning of the election results.

Destiny had it that the resignation of the president of the Republic created a new political situation, a new institutional situation which led to the fact that the government, with me as its head, was compelled to continue governing. This was followed, as you know, by the installation of the Higher State Council and the advent of the leader Mohamed Boudiaf. The government was asked to continue, which it has done, and to adapt its economic and political program to the developments that we experienced after the first round of legislative elections.

The difficulties facing the government, as you rightly pointed out, have both economic and political characteristics, and there is a dialectical relation between politics and the economy. The action in the four weeks after the first announcement of the Higher State Council was a review of the program approved last December by the National People's Assembly, and [the government] has taken from this program and selected, in the framework of this program, what in its opinion deserves to have receive special priority.

[Correspondent] Your Excellency the head of government, can we return, if you wish, to the election process. There is perhaps on the internal and external levels an attempt to spread the feeling of injustice caused by the halt in the election process. The justifications put forward so far, according to some political analysts, have not been convincing, meaning there is some feeling of injustice in the political formations that were to take power in Algeria.

[Ghozali] You are right; that is what happened according to observers abroad and inside the country. This belief depends on what these observers thought was happening in this country. Did this belief agree with with reality? [passage omitted]

Let me just say that as far as this government is concerned, we rely only on reality or facts. What has happened after the first round [of legislative elections]? The head of state, not a little thing. That resignation led the Constitutional Council, and its role is known, to attempt to remedy the situation resulting from that resignation and the constitutional vacuum. Some ask: Did the head of state resign or was he deposed?

[Correspondent] Some also wonder about this resignation's coinciding with the National People's Assembly being out of session.

[Ghozali] Naturally the National People's Assembly concluded its session on 24 December with an official session attended by all deputies and the government. If we pursue this line of analysis, [one would ask] who can know what is in the mind of the head of state?

[Correspondent] On the official level, Your Excellency the head of government, does the dissolution of the National People's Assembly require an official announcement?

[Ghozali] Who dissolved the National People's Assembly?

[Correspondent] The head of state.

[Ghozali] The head of state, who is the same official or institution who at the same time first dissolved the National People's Assembly and a week later submitted his resignation. I proceed from these facts. As for explanations of them, everybody has his own interpretation. This is a tangible fact, and the government is not meant to get into such explanations. We can talk about them.

[Correspondent] [Words indistinct]

[Ghozali] No, explanations differ; some say one thing and others say something else. [passage omitted] This is the constitutional aspect.

[Correspondent] Yes.

[Ghozali] There is not only the constitutional aspect, however, there is also the political one. We must try to not close our eyes to one of the aspects of the problem. I talked about the constitutional aspect, but the political one remains. What was the reaction of the people in the wake of the first round, and what is the situation we reached then?

All Algerians or the majority of them were shocked. They feared then that Algeria would move toward civil war. [passage omitted]

[Correspondent] In your opinion, Your Excellency the head of government, would this have happened if the elections had not been halted?

[Ghozali] The Guemar events took place before the first round.

[Correspondent] I mean the events that took place after the setting up [of the Higher State Council].

[Ghozali] No, that happened before the first round and continued and was repeated after Guemar. How many gendarmes were killed between Guemar and the first round? Thus the officials of the Islamic Salvation Front [FIS] and the groups affiliated to the Salvation Front started, worked [changes thought] or the attacks against the security forces started before the first round and continued after it. [passage omitted]

Analyses focused on the political backgrounds of the choice of this one or another [new ministers]. This perhaps highlighted a misunderstanding. I know, I am not talking about the public; I do not think that this is the reaction of the public, although I do not have the means to know the stand of the public. Some groups, and perhaps cadres, I was told, wonder: How is it that a man who was one of t. founders of the Salvation Front entered the government?

[Correspondent] After he broke away from the Salvation Front.

[Ghozali] He broke away; we know this man's stand, if we speak of individuals. Said Guechi was in fact one of the founders of the Salvation Front, and his political conviction is known. I know him first as a nationalist; he was a freedom fighter and was jailed by the French. He was also imprisoned after independence because of his political actions. I know well his ideas. He is among the men [words indistinct] who founded the Salvation Front, who differed 100 percent with everything which we are fighting now, which are the recourse to violence, the nonrecognition of laws, or the rejection of democracy and so on. He is among the people who had the courage to take a stand, before June and after it. [passage omitted]

Our conviction is that Algeria is [the country of] all of us; we are all Algerians, regardless of our affiliation to given political currents. The thing that brings us together is the adherence to the unity of our homeland, the unity of our people. It is the adherence to the need to escape the crisis. It is also a rejection of all practicing of violence.

You know, and the brothers who are wondering now see that the state and the institutions of the state have not been mean in their role as far as the defense of security, the march of institutions, and the defense of democracy are concerned. There are people who made sacrifices and are still doing so. I mention our soldiers, whom we sent to the front. They are being killed.

[Correspondent] Yes.

[Ghozali] Why is this? This is for the defense of the security of citizens, for the sake of the dedication of the policy of rejecting any form of violence in our country. We are continuing on this path, and we will not deviate from it whatsoever.

[Correspondent] Thank you, Your Excellency the head of government. We will pause briefly for the news headlines and then will return to resume our dialogue. Thank you. [Passage omitted]

[Ghozali] [Passage omitted] Radical change is not for the sake of change only; it is for the sake of escaping a crisis and a very bad and complicated situation. What I said when I spoke of the speculations of cadres was that there is no cabinet reshuffle which can satisfy 25 million Algerians—just like the national soccer team or any sports team.

[Correspondent] Will the cabinet reshuffle that you carried out satisfy Algerians or a percentage of Algerians?

[Ghozali] I do not know. Who knows? The thing I know is that the only thing that will satisfy Algerians at the end of the day is the effect of any plan or policy that can be felt in real terms. Ask me what is the effect of this change or plan as far as the daily life of Algerians, housing, employment, and the future of the country are concerned. We can talk about this.

[Correspondent] Yes, Your Excellency the head of government, there are, however, some who see that for instance in the program of your government dated 24 [February] there is the expression: 26 December was nothing but a confirmation of a reality represented in the fact that the overwhelming majority of the Algerian people aspire for change and for the expulsion of the men responsible for the crisis. Is there no contradiction as far as this change, the reshuffle, is concerned and the content of the document?

[Ghozali] Nobody has asked me: Where is the contradiction between...

[Correspondent, interrupting] I will tell you, Your Excellency the head of government, there is a clear contradiction in the meaning of this paragraph in my opinion. On the one hand, you decide that 26 December confirms the people's aspirations for change and the expulsion of the men responsible for the crisis, and on the other, the election process was halted. There is first a people's aspiration for change, expressed on 26 December, and on the other hand there is...

[Ghozali, interrupting] You have returned now to the first question. We have left the framework of the question that we were talking about. The stopping of the elections was a result of a new political and institutional

situation. How can the government organize a second round in a situation in which the head of state has resigned and in which there is a political vacuum? We should not forget that the government is nothing but a body which implements the election process. Who summons the voters? It is the head of state.

[Correspondent] Yes.

[Ghozali] The stopping of the election process was a direct result of the new situation that resulted from the resignation of the head of state and the political vacuum created by this resignation. Thus, this was not a choice of the government, and the latter has no right to adopt such a policy. The government's duty is only to implement the election process. However, because there was no head of state or the vacancy of the presidency of the Republic and a constitutional vacuum, the government did not have the power to carry out a second round.

[Correspondent] Your Excellency the head of government, let us return to the issue of the government plan. You have mentioned several factors such as trust and Algerians' readiness, because in this program you defined the priorities and conditions of the new economic start and investments for state equipment. Do the internal political factors and the general psychological atmosphere, which are characterized by doubts about the sincerity of speeches, and so on, permit your government to enact on the ground the bases of your program?

[Ghozali] Your question contains precisely the real problem; that is the problem. The situation we have reached and in which we find ourselves is a difficult one. I am among the people who know well the difficulty of the financial situation. There is a thing, however, which is harder and more dangerous than that: It is the work that you pointed out, sister. It is how we can make Algerians recover their trust so as to be able to regain their taste for work and hope. In reality—and I had several opportunities last year to insist upon this—the link between the ruler and the citizen was cut, and the reasons for this are known. [passage omitted]

What are the means available to me to show the citizens that I am not here merely for the sake of remaining in office? I have only one way at my disposal: to resign. This is the problem, and this is the paradox. In other words, how do I show Algerians that I am not here for the sake of staying in office. The only way I have is to leave, but if I do that, would that action mean this is a contribution to solving citizens' problems? If I perceived only my own personal interests and wishes... [changes thought] We are now living under circumstances in which responsibility is nothing but 100-percent sacrifice. Let me return, if you are satisfied with this answer.

[Correspondent] The question was asked clarification purposes, for the public, naturally.

[Ghozali] I will return to this point—the issue of the cabinet reshuffle—so as to complete it. There is the matter of trust. I hear people say that this is a political reshuffle and that it is, as you said, in contradiction to the announcement of or the will for change. Some went even further and said that this change was a mere political act so that the head of government would remain in power.. I do not see a link between retaining the head of government and this topic, and I reject these analyses because I do not consider the post of head of government to be a post. I consider it a mission. I came with orders to carry out a mission, and it is not my desire to remain in office permanently.

As for change, what is the change that would satisfy Algerians? The change that will achieve this is not a mere cabinet reshuffle. If we (?wanted) radical change there would have been, for instance, a change of the whole government. Why not? Why was the entire government not changed? I do not oppose this idea. However, the initiative cannot come from me. If the initiative comes from me it means a new head of state would come and ask for help from all Algerians, and Sid Ahmed Ghozali says: I am going. What is the meaning of such a stand? It is something else if the head of state really said: I do not need you any more. He did not say that. In addition to that, why would I run away from responsibility say: You have come and asked for help from Algerians, but I am not ready to help. [passage omitted]

In reality, the plan, if I wanted to describe it under a small number of headings, has priorities. The action plan contains priorities, among which there is everything related to regaining the moral authority of the state. I am talking about the moral authority of the state. In the eyes of Algerians the state has lost its credibility in all fields. When I talk about the state or the credibility of the state, I do not mean only pure security issues. Security does not lie only in physical security. There are perhaps things which are more important than that. There is security as far as the fate of the individual, his future, and that of his children are concerned. The authority of the state is not only the stick; it depends more on its ability to serve the citizen in all ways.

[Correspondent] Matters must also materialize as soon as possible.

[Ghozali] The authority of the state must appear through all aspects of citizens' lives. The second heading is to restart the production system. We should not forget that for seven or eight years...

[Correspondent, interrupting] Stagnation.

[Ghozali] Our economy has been stagnant, and the production system is working at a rate of less than 50 percent. These are among the priorities; we must get out of that. If we do not know first how to revive or rescue this system, which is (?sinking), there is no need to think about investment.

The third heading is starting up the dynamism which will focus on the vital needs of the citizens. I am talking here about housing and employment. You know, and the citizen knows and feels this. When I talk about 1.5

million unemployed persons, the figure is actually larger than this because in our statistics we do not count women. I asked our statistics office to change this. We think that women...

[Correspondent, interrupting] Are not concerned with work?

[Ghozali] No. Thus it is necessary, when we talk about the unemployed, to also include women so as to give a real picture of our country. [passage omitted]

For the first time this year, within the framework of the 1992 finance bill, the government allocated 42.5 billion dinars for the purpose of financially purging enterprises. This is not sufficient for solving this problem completely. This amount is, however, very important; 42 billion is more than 12 percent of the state's budget. [passage omitted]

The new hydrocarbons bill allows the Sonatrach national enterprise to have recourse—to a greater extent than in the past—to contributions from those foreign companies which have the financial and technological ability to work with us, or participate with us, in increasing the production of our fields, and in general that of our underground resources, hydrocarbons and minerals. The legal circumstances and conditions are available now. The commercial conditions remain.

[Correspondent] And the extent of the response?

[Ghozali] The response: out of 22 companies which Sonatrach contacted, four made apologies while 18 gave a positive response and expressed their interest. These 18 companies are negotiating with the national enterprise.

The third aspect is represented in the circumstances related to the political and social environment. The thing required from these foreign companies is a long-term commitment. We should not forget what the philosophy of these new contracts is. This is that in exchange for allowing these companies to have a share in the right of production for a number of years, they pay in advance to Sonatrach—in other words, to Algeria—a given sum. A company which is required to commit itself, whose commitment materializes immediately by paying something for which it does not receive anything for six or seven years, is going to take precautions, and it is going to make sure that it is going to work in a stable situation, a political situation.

[Correspondent] This creates a kind of balance in the spending budget.

[Ghozali] No. If all these three conditions are fulfilled, our country will have the opportunity to collect $4 billion or $5 billion, and this is what we need now, so that we really can have a new start in reviving the economy, at the level of the production system which is now [word indistinct], and also in investment. [passage omitted]

There are things, even foods, which we do not produce in our country. We are in a very dangerous state of dependency. When we talked about our resources, $12 billion a year, I said that 75 percent of that goes toward the debt. Add to this the approximately 15 percent which goes only to meet the import of food. We must know that our country is by itself importing 50 percent of all the world's wheat exports, for instance—50 percent of the wheat in the entire world is destined for Algeria. We devote $2 billion a year to food. [passage omitted]

[Correspondent] Your Excellency the head of government, let us return to the security situation in the country. Some analysts even say that setting up special centers can create reactions which do not benefit the regime. As an example, the Arab Organization for Human Rights is studying the possibility of sending a fact-finding commission to follow up on human rights in Algeria.

[Ghozali] During the situation we experienced in June, the state of siege, centers called security centers were opened. These are the same centers. We did not conceal these centers from anybody then, and there are people who came from abroad—Amnesty International and Les Droits de L'Homme [La Ligue des Droits de l'Homme—French League for Human Rights] visited and saw how conditions are. We have nothing to hide in this area.

[Correspondent] One final word, very briefly, Your Excellency the head of government, on the national rally [al-tajamu' al-watani] to which you announced your affiliation.

[Ghozali] The national rally is first of all at the level of an idea which was expressed by the chairman of the Higher State Council, who said, when he addressed Algerians and asked them to contribute to rescuing the country: I am calling for a national rally. This is an idea which has not yet taken a given form. It is a political idea, and I said yesterday that I believed in that idea, supported it, and would work to attain it.

[Correspondent] Yes, but some parties understood that as the elimination of their presence from the political arena.

[Ghozali] They have no justification for interpreting it that way. Abrogation does not come from an idea; it comes out of a legal measure.

[Correspondent] Then perhaps a psychological elimination.

[Ghozali] No, the psychological abrogation can only come from the citizen. If the latter is convinced of this idea and becomes affiliated with it, this is thus political pluralism.

[Correspondent] Your Excellency the head of government, thank you for responding to our invitation, and thanks to our dear listeners who have tuned in. We hope to meet again. Goodbye.

[Ghozali] God willing.

Accord Permits IAEA To Inspect Reactor

LD2702212192 Algiers ENTV Television Network in Arabic 1900 GMT 27 Feb 92

[Text] Algeria today reached a binding agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency [IAEA]. This was announced today by an IAEA spokesman in Vienna.

The spokesman announced that the agreement will allow the IAEA to inspect the Salam nuclear reactor being built in Ain Ouessera. The IAEA also reports that following Algeria's invitation the IAEA has twice inspected the reactor.

Egypt

Musa on Contacts With Iraq, Sudan Relations

PM2602093492 London SAWT AL-KUWAYT AL-DUWALI in Arabic 22 Feb 92 p 4

["'Amr Musa Says: Kuwait's Wounds Cannot Heal With Saddam in Power"]

[Excerpts] Cairo, SAWT AL-KUWAYT—Egyptian Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa has expressed his doubts that the wounds suffered by Kuwait and the Arab Gulf states, as a result of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, can heal as long as Saddam Husayn is in power. 'Amr Musa denied the existence of any contacts between Egypt and the Iraqi regime at any level. [passage omitted]

On Egyptian-Sudanese relations, the minister said that it has not been agreed to arrange a summit meeting soon between the Egyptian and Sudanese presidents. He said that there was no intention to hold any negotiations on the Hala'ib area, because Egypt will not negotiate about territory that is 100 percent Egyptian. He added that the talks of the committee, comprising representatives of the two countries, are confined to humanitarian aspects concerning ways of facilitating the movements of the tribes living in the area. Musa described reports about the Iranian presence in Sudan as exaggerated. Sudan, he said, is not a superpower that can represent a source of alarm for us. Iran and Sudan, he added, are entitled to strengthen relations between them, as long as this does not affect Egyptian national security. Otherwise Egypt would adopt a different stance, because it would be impossible to remain silent.

In an exclusive statement to SAWT AL-KUWAYT, the Egyptian minister said that the special agreements concluded by some Gulf states with Iran have no effect on the Damascus Declaration, because Gulf security concerns the Gulf states themselves. Besides, Egypt's participation in the security measures is linked to these states' wishes and decisions. Minister Musa denied rumors that some Gulf states want to exclude Egypt from Gulf security arrangements. None of the Gulf states, he said, has given any indication of a desire to do so. He said that the ministers of the six Gulf states will hold a meeting next month to discuss the aid approved by the Gulf Cooperation Council summit in Kuwait in December. He said that they will discuss completing the $10 billion sum, $6.5 billion of which has so far been offered by Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. This aid will be granted to the states that backed Kuwait in the war to liberate it.

Editor Voices 'Pessimism' on Bilateral Talks

NC2402150792 Cairo MENA in Arabic 0626 GMT 24 Feb 92

[Excerpt] Cairo, 24 Feb (MENA)—AL-AHRAM chief editor Ibrahim Nafi' has voiced pessimism about the prospects of achieving tangible progress in Washington's bilateral peace negotiations, attributing this to Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhaq Shamir's continued intransigence, his refusal to discuss essential issues seriously, and his rejection of the land-for-peace principle.

In an article in today's AL-AHRAM, Nafi' says that the Likud is trying to gain time to attain several strategic objectives, the most important of which is to swallow up the largest possible area of Palestinian territory, by building settlements in the West Bank and Gaza to absorb approximately 400,000 Jewish immigrants from the former USSR.

Nafi' asserts that Israel is currently preoccupied with obtaining U.S. loan guarantees to continue building settlements, even if it has to deceive the U.S. Administration or present distorted facts to the world to get them.

He adds that Israel will continue its ploys, and exploit the Jewish lobby's pressure on the U.S. Administration, both to gain time and to obtain the loan guarantees. He notes that it will also exploit the pretext of its parliamentary elections to avoid making basic concessions in the bilateral talks.

AL-AHRAM's chief editor says he believes that Israel agreed to go to Washington for several reasons, but that conducting serious negotiations to achieve a comprehensive and just solution was not one of them. He explains that Israel wants to appear to be a peace seeker in front of the world, and try to appease the U.S. Administration and avoid a direct and acute clash with it.

The writer says that the United States is in a very awkward position, even in an ethical and moral sense. He explains that the United States, which has to demonstrate its credibility by applying the rules of international legitimacy to the Middle East issue as it did in the Gulf war, is being called upon to insist on halting the settlement program in the occupied territories; and from a strategic viewpoint, it does not want the Middle East to revert to being a volatile region, as this would adversely affect its vital interests, particularly in connection with oil supplies.

The writer asks if the United States will find itself forced to impose formulas for bilateral agreements on the Arab delegations and Israel. He says he does not rule out the possibility that the U.S. Administration has such formulas, but he does not think that the Bush administration will try to impose them on Israel in an election year.

He says that the situation will not change much after this week's negotiations in Washington. He notes that the loss of several more months will not affect the Arab negotiating stance, which is based on refusal to make concessions on the occupied territories and on legitimate Arab rights; and refusal to give any territorial gains to Israel, or normalize relations with it as long as it insists on an expansionist settlement policy. [passage omitted]

U.S. Termed 'Impotent' Before Israeli 'Arrogance'

NC2502151892 Cairo AL-JUMHURIYAH in Arabic 22 Feb 92 p 12

["Dividing Lines" column by Samir Rajab]

[Text] The peace process will never be secure if Israel continues its reckless adventures.

The aggression against south Lebanon will not facilitate negotiations, as Shamir believes; on the contrary, it will make them more complicated, because Israel reveals its bad intentions every day.

Some believe that Israel wants to escalate the situation so that it can get as much as it can. If this is true, then it will, regrettably, be undermining all attempts to build bridges of confidence between Israel and the Arabs. How can an understanding be reached if hands are covered with the blood of recent battles, and when wounds from previous wars have not yet healed?

Yitzhaq Shamir is putting his people and the entire region at risk by pursuing the wrong course. The United States will, quite frankly, find itself in an untenable position if it does not take a firm stand against Israel's foolishness.

It does not matter that Israel withdrew from south Lebanon after invading, because the incursion in itself was a direct message to Washington that the ground is shaky under the peace conference the United States called for and is sponsoring.

Moreover, Israel is trying, in its own way, to rob the United States of its credibility. How can the U.S. Administration continue to urge safeguarding international legitimacy when Israel's bombs, planes, and artillery are dealing it fatal blows?

During the Gulf crisis, the United States committed itself to solving the Middle East problem within the framework of international legitimacy. What image is it projecting now, by appearing impotent before Shamir's arrogance and intransigence? Does Washington realize that Israeli tyranny has reached the extent that it is exacting revenge for its stand on the demand for loan guarantees to build settlements? Or does judging issues still fall within the context of the "former" close relationship?

At any rate, Arabs should remain silent, adhere to peace, and defend it with all their strength. Israel is now committing one or two crimes a day, but it will not by any means be able to confront international public opinion, which is exasperated with its leaders' practices. The whole world now knows who is right and who is not.

Don't give Israel too much rope to play with. Peace for Israel is the earthquake that will upset everything. Therefore it is our duty to give this embryo all our devotion and care, because it is the hope we have been eager to fulfill for a long time.

Libya

Families of Lockerbie Victims Appeal for Restraint

LD2702121292 Tripoli JANA in Arabic 1140 GMT 27 Feb 92

[Text] London 27 Feb (JANA)—The families of victims of the Lockerbie incident involving the American airplane and members of the British Parliament participating in a campaign of solidarity with the Great Jamahiriyah sent an open letter to UN Secretary General Butrus Ghali in which they called on the United States and Britain to respect international law and not to adopt any forceful measures against the Great Jamahiriyah.

In their letter, which was published in London, the organizers of the campaign emphasized that any action against the Great Jamahiriyah would be an enormous mistake and would not serve the interests of the victims of the Lockerbie incident.

Guinea-Bissau President Vieira Visits

LD2602111292 Tripoli JANA in English 1633 GMT 25 Feb 92

[Arab Maghreb Union "Pool" item]

[Text] Tripoli, al-Nawwar [February] 25, JANA Arab Maghreb Union—President Joao Bernardo Vieira of Guinea-Bissau and his accompanying delegation arrived in Tripoli last evening on a visit to the Great Jamahariyah.

A grand reception was planned for President Vieira where Staff Major 'Abd-al-Salam Jallud headed a reception committee at Tripoli International Airport which also included the assistant secretary of the General People's Committee, the secretary of people's congresses affairs and the secretary of trade unions and asssociations affairs of the General People's Congress and a number of secretaries of the General People's Committee, a number of officers of the Armed People and members of the diplomatic corps accredited to the Great Jamahariyah.

Upon his arrival the president of Guinea-Bissau made a statement to a JANA correspondent saying that he is very happy about this visit which will give him the opportunity to conduct talks and discussions regarding the promotion of established co-operative relations between the two countries and discussing a number of international issues of joint interest.

The delegation of Guinea-Bissau includes the country's foreign minister, the minister of planning and international co-operation and a number of senior officials in Guinea-Bissau.

Meets Jallud

LD2602113192 Tripoli JANA in English 1647 GMT 25 Feb 92

[Text] Tripoli, al Nawwar [February] 25, JAMAHARIYAH NEWS AGENCY—Staff Major 'Abd-al-Salam Jallud held a meeting this morning with President Joao Bernardo Vieira, chairman of the State Council in the Republic of Guinea-Bissau who is currently visiting the Great Jamahariyah.

The meeting discussed bilateral relations and means to improve it in the interests of the two friendly nations.

Memorandum Signed

LD2602114492 Tripoli JANA in English 1635 GMT 25 Feb 92

[Arab Maghreb Union "Pool" item]

[Text] Tripoli, al Nawwar [February] 25, JANA, Arab Maghreb Union Pool—A memorandum of co-operation between the Great Jamahariyah and the the Republic of Guinea-Bissau was signed today in Tripoli with the aim of bolstering co-operation on various levels between the two friendly countries.

The memorandum detailed the basis for co-operation in the areas of economic affairs, the media, culture, health, agriculture, education, formation and vocational training.

The memorandum was signed by the secretary of people's committee for the treasury and Bernardino Cardoso, minister for planning and international co-operation, on behalf of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau.

Morocco

France's Dumas Meets With Minister Filali

LD2702200892 Rabat Moroccan Kingdom Radio Network in Arabic 1300 GMT 27 Feb 92

[Text] Abdellatif Filali, minister of state for foreign affairs and cooperation, today received his French counterpart Roland Dumas. Their meeting was attended by the ambassadors of both countries and Abdellatif Filali's close advisers.

The talks included all issues of mutual interest. The two ministers held tete-a-tete talks, then held an enlarged working session which included the members of the two delegations.

Roland Dumas arrived in Rabat last night on a working visit to Morocco.

Terms Talks With King 'Fruitful'

LD2702212992 Paris Antenne-2 Television Network in French 1900 GMT 27 Feb 92

[Excerpts] Roland Dumas is in Morocco on a 48-hour visit intended to give a new boost to French-Moroccan relations. [passage omitted]

We are now going straight to Gerard Beaufils and Gilles Deblaire, who are on the scene:

[Beaufils] [Passage omitted] The Moroccan authorities are delighted at the fourth visit in two years by the French foreign minister. After being received in a small sitting room at the royal palace for a meeting lasting an hour, Roland Dumas carried out a broad review of topical problems with the Moroccan sovereign. Apparently the chill between France and Morocco seems to have been dispelled for the time being—relations between Rabat and Paris are no longer suffering from a bad cold.

[Deblaire] Did you also talk about medicine?

[Dumas] Yes, right at the start of the conversation, because I had in my mind the remark by the Moroccan king, who had said in a recent interview that relations between France and Morocco were suffering from a cold, that they had been struck down by the flu. I immediately asked him if his flu was better, and he smiled at me...

[Deblaire, interrupting] [Words indistinct] doctor in spite of himself?

[Dumas] In spite of himself, and he immediately replied: I am completely cured.

[Beaufils] Roland Dumas described his talks as being very intensive and extremely fruitful, and he furthermore said that France intends in the future to back Morocco's case to promote this country's integration within the major international bodies.

The views were identical on bilateral problems. They agreed on the policy to adopt jointly toward the region, particularly with regard to Algeria and the Western Sahara, but a point of disagreement has already arisen: Morocco has made it clear that it would be difficult for it to ratify a UN Security Council resolution calling for sanctions against Libya.

Tunisia

Karoui Returns From Syria; Agreements Detailed

LD2802084192 Tunis Tunisian Republic Radio Network in Arabic 0600 GMT 28 Feb 92

[Text] Prime Minister Hamed Karoui returned to Tunis yesterday evening from Damascus after heading the Tunisian delegation to the second session of the Tunisian-Syrian Joint Higher Commission which was crowned by the signing of the minutes of the meetings.

The minutes included the point that the two sides agreed to continue their dialogue and consultations on foreign policy. The minutes also noted that Tunisia and Syria were satisfied with existing cooperation in the field of trade and with the positive results achieved by Tunisia's import of Syrian petroleum and export of phosphate fertilizers.

The two sides agreed to consolidate cooperation in the industrial field and in both the private and public sectors by all available means. This can be achieved by establishing joint ventures and exchanging expertise.

The two countries agreed to expand and develop their bilateral cooperation in the transportation field by developing cooperation between aviation and maritime transportation institutions in both countries.

In the cultural field, the committee recorded its satisfaction with the signing of the cooperation executive program. The committee urged cultural sector officials to implement the articles of the program.

In the information sector, the two sides reviewed the implementation of the executive program on information cooperation since the first session [of the higher commission]. Within the context of the new program they agreed to widen the scope of information and television cooperation, to adopt the necessary executive measures for joint television productions, and to form a joint technical committee consisting of representatives of the two countries' news agencies to study establishing direct contacts between them.

Kuwait

Nation To Buy Arms 'From Any Source' To Rearm

LD2702184392 Kuwait KUNA in Arabic 1725 GMT 27 Feb 92

[Excerpt] Kuwait, 27 Feb (KUNA)—Kuwaiti Defense Minister Shaykh 'Ali Sabah al-Salim has reiterated Kuwait's appreciation and gratitude to those fraternal and friendly countries which supported Kuwaiti's legitimate rights. He added that work is proceeding, day in and day out, to rebuild the military installations destroyed by the Iraqi forces during their invasion of Kuwait on modern and sophisticated bases and criteria.

Shaykh 'Ali was speaking today on the 31st anniversary of Kuwait's National Day and the first anniversary of the liberation of Kuwait from the Iraqi occupation. He pointed out: "Kuwait is working to create a strong and effective Army employing the most advanced technology. It will do this by acquiring very sophisticated weapons from any source, be it in the East or the West." [passage omitted]

Saudi Arabia

Further on Visit of Iraqi Opposition Leader

King Fahd Expresses Support

NC2802065292 (Clandestine) Voice of the Iraqi People in Arabic 1500 GMT 27 Feb 92

[Report from unidentified Voice of the Iraqi People correspondent in Riyadh; date not given—recorded]

[Text] Brother citizens, God's peace and blessings be upon you. We salute you from the Riyadh Palace of Conferences in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. King Fahd Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz, custodian of the two holy mosques, last night received a delegation of Iraqi opposition leaders that included Ayatollah Sayyid Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim [chairman of the Supreme Assembly of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, SAIRI]; Staff Lieutenant General 'Arif 'Abd-al-Razzaq, former vice president, prime minister, and defense minister; Staff Lt. Gen. Ibrahim al-Dawud, former defense minister; and representatives of the Kurdish Front, the Arab and Kurdish tribes, and leaders of various political parties and blocs. His Highness Prince Turki al-Faysal and Major Gen. Muhammad 'Id 'Ubayd attended the meeting.

The custodian of the two holy mosques expressed his pleasure at receiving the delegation. He said that the aid the Kingdom provided during the Iran-Iraq war was not given to serve Saddam or out of hatred for Iran, but in defense of the Iraqi people. Speaking about the Kuwaiti crisis before its occupation, his majesty said that he asked Saddam and the amir of Kuwait to give him the mandate to resolve the dispute. He added that this was done and Kuwait agreed to leave all of the al-Rumaylah oil field to Iraq, to pay $2.5 billion, to lease Warbah Island, and to delineate the borders. Saddam welcomed this.

The custodian of the two holy mosques then said: But I was then surprised by the massing of Saddam's forces on Kuwait's border. Our foreign minister went to Baghdad and met Saddam, who emphasized to him that nothing had happened and that these were merely exercises. But matters became more complicated. He added: Saddam telephoned me later and confirmed to me that nothing would happen. Because he was the head of a state, I took his words at face value because a head of state cannot lie. I then invited the two sides to meet here in the Kingdom. You are aware of what went on at the meeting.

Kuwaiti heir apparent Shaykh Sa'd al-'Abdallah al-Sabah and Saddam's deputy 'Izzat Ibrahim told me that they agreed to meet in Baghdad in two days. They left here on Wednesday. I had no other thoughts but that the negotiations would be resumed in Baghdad. But I was surprised to hear on Saturday that Saddam's forces had entered Kuwait. I contacted our embassy there, which confirmed this report. I called Saddam but could not find him. He then telephoned me at night, claiming that he was outside Baghdad. I told him that what had happened was painful, and I asked him why it had happened after he had agreed to resume the talks. He said: I will send my deputy to you, because I do not want to say everything on the telephone. 'Izzat then came. He remained silent for a long time until I asked him to start talking. He said: I will tell you what Saddam said. Saddam says that Kuwait is part of Iraq and has returned to its roots.

The custodian of the two holy mosques then asked: Iraq is one of the larger Arab countries. It has material resources, oil wealth, rivers, agricultural land, and the active and clever Iraqi people. What reason is there for occupying Kuwait? Saddam was looking for war, any war, and it appears that aggression flows in his blood. But no matter how clever an oppressor is, he cannot remain in power as long as he does not listen to advice and does not let the sons of his country share in determining the fate of the homeland. He said: A rule cannot be just if other views do not reach the ruler freely, easily, and without any fear so that opinions can interact and everyone can share in decisionmaking. If free, upright people who fear no punishment for their opinions are absent, then hypocrites and sycophants will prevail and extoll only the ruler's view, and this brings destruction to [word indistinct]. Look what happened to Hitler and Mussolini, and look at the Soviet Union.

The custodian of the two holy mosques said: The Arab nation has been afflicted by rulers who do not think and who do not listen to sincere opinions. He added: Iraq is a country of rational men who have intellects and opinions. Why did Saddam destroy them, and what does he want?

King Fahd Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz spoke about the ruling system in the Kingdom and how the regime is utilizing the country's resources to build the homeland and serve the citizens. He said: There were only seven secondary and 32 elementary schools in 1952. But there are now seven universities, 47 colleges, in addition to the other scientific and military colleges [words indistinct] agriculture, and advanced industry. We have three funds to help our citizens set up projects: one for supporting industry, another for agriculture, and the third for reconstruction.

His majesty returned to the Gulf crisis. He said: Why did Sudan, Yemen, Jordan, and Palestine back Saddam despite all our [word indistinct] aid to them? 'Arafat was supposed to have declared that he does not want to be either with Saddam or against him, either with or against, but rather to adhere to his central issue, Palestine, which also is our cause. We would have respected him. But what happened was the opposite.

Turning to the leaders of the Iraqi opposition, the custodian of the two holy mosques told them: This is a blessed opportunity for me to meet with the intellectuals of the great Iraqi people. He emphasized that the Kingdom only wants prosperity, justice, and peace for Iraq and only dignity and glory for the Iraqi people. He added that the calamity, despite its gravity, is a lesson. He said: We should learn and benefit from what happened. I welcome you in your country, and God willing, we will meet in our second homeland, Iraq. With God's support this is not impossible, because injustice and tyranny do not last and only righteousness and good remain. God's doors are open, and He does not forget. He is the best to protect and the best to help. [Koranic verse]

Concluding his speech, the custodian of the two holy mosques called on the Iraqi opposition leaders to unite and close ranks and put Iraq above any other consideration. He said: Tragedies [word indistinct] the nation and we hope that what happened will not be repeated. His majesty added: Our borders with Iraq are long. The wrong committed will not affect our relations with our Iraqi brothers. We will forget the wrong if its causes are removed. We hope reason, rationality, and farsightedness will be restored. His majesty emphasized that Saddam's regime is unacceptable to the international community, the Arabs, and Iraq. He added: The whole world is boycotting this regime and is with you. I am completely with you. He reiterated his pleasure at meeting with the Iraqi opposition delegation.

Sayyid Muhammd al-Baqir al-Hakim then spoke. He thanked King Fahd Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz, custodian of the two holy mosques, for his profound feelings toward the Iraqi people during their current tribulation. On behalf of the delegation he congratulated the king on his 10th anniversary as ruler of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. He presented a detailed explanation of the sufferings of the Iraqi people inside and outside Iraq, and he emphasized that the criminal Saddam regime is a threat to Iraq, the Arabs, the region, and the world. He said: We appeal to you, O custodian of the two holy mosques, to support your Iraqi brothers in their struggle for freedom, salvation, glory, and dignity.

The meeting lasted around two and a half hours.

Al-Hakim Comments on Talks

NC2702163292 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1500 GMT 27 Feb 92

[Text] Riyadh, 27 Feb (MENA)—Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim, chairman of the Supreme Assembly of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, has said that his visit to Saudi Arabia achieved its goal of consolidating relations with Saudi Arabia, an important nation on the Iraqi issue. Al-Hakim said that he presented the Iraqi opposition's views to Saudi officials in the same way that they were presented to Syrian and Iranian officials.

At a news conference in Riyadh today al-Hakim said that he and members of the Iraqi opposition discussed ways to come out with a united stand toward the regime in Baghdad. He also inspected the condition of Iraqi refugees in Saudi Arabia and praised the care and services given them by Saudi authorities.

Al-Hakim said that all Saudi officials, primarily King Fahd Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz, the custodian of the two holy mosques, showed understanding. Saudi authorities agreed on the ideas and concepts that we presented on the Iraqi opposition movement against the Husayn regime, he said.

The SAIRI chairman pointed out that the failure of the Iraqi uprising against Saddam can be attributed to several causes, the most important of which are the lack of an internal leadership; the oppressive measures taken by the Iraqi authorities; and the regime's use of various weapons, including weapons which are internationally banned.

The Iraqi opposition, he added, is trying to overcome all the negative aspects that hamper the movement, to explain its position to the world, and to attract Arab and Islamic support.

Baqir al-Hakim remarked that the Iraqi opposition has moved from being an opposition of individuals to an independent and united opposition movement, one embracing all the Iraqi people. He said that all parties agree that a united political leadership and a national assembly need to be established to draw up plans to face the current regime and overthrow it.

Al-Hakim noted that an agreement has been reached between the Iraqi opposition and the Iraqi Kurds on rejecting the division of Iraq and maintaining autonomous rule within the framework of Iraq's political unity.

He appealed to Iraq's neighbors and international organizations to support the Iraqi opposition, which is seeking to establish a new regime in Iraq based on

respect for freedom of thought; on the multiparty system; and on the determination to maintain Iraq's territorial and popular unity and its political links to the Arab and Islamic worlds.

Al-Hakim Departs

LD2702233292 Riyadh Saudi Arabian Kingdom Radio Network in Arabic 2230 GMT 27 Feb 92

[Text] Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim, chairman of the Supreme Council of the Iraqi Revolution, left Riyadh Thursday evening. He was seen off at King Khalid International Airport by some officials and a number of members of the Iraqi opposition.

Further on Joint FRG Economic Session

LD2802094292 Riyadh SPA in English 1251 GMT 27 Feb 92

[Text] Riyadh, Feb 27, SPA—The Saudi/German Joint Commission for Technical and Economic Cooperation wound up its 10th session here on Thursday. The Saudi side to the four-day meeting was chaired by Muhammad al-'Ali Aba-al-Khayl, the minister of finance and national economy and the German side was headed by Juergen Moellemann, the minister of economy.

During the meetings, the two sides reviewed with satisfaction the progress achieved in the economic, scientific and technical cooperation between the two countries since the previous session of the commission and expressed determination to continue efforts for further achievements.

The commission has assigned two subcommittees, the first for scientific and technical cooperation and the second to tackle economic cooperation. The commission also reviewed matters concerning the Saudi industrial and agricultural exports to Germany and the European market in common.

The process of the current commercial talks between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the European Community, was also discussed during the commission's meeting.

Germany's Moellemann Departs

LD2802095792 Riyadh SPA in English 1255 GMT 27 Feb 92

[Text] Riyadh, Feb 27, SPA—Juergen Moellemann, the German minister of economy, left here on Thursday after a visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia during which he co-chaired the 10th session of the Saudi/German Joint Commission for Economic and Technical Cooperation which was concluded earlier in the day. He was seen off at the King Khalid International Airport by Mohammed Aba-al-Khayl, the minister of finance and national economy, 'Abbas Fa'iq Ghazzawi, the Saudi ambassador to Germany and a number of senior officials.

United Arab Emirates

French Defense Minister To Attend Joint Exercises

JN2602151692 Manama WAKH in Arabic 0915 GMT 26 Feb 92

[Text] Abu Dhabi, 26 Feb (WAKH)—French Defense Minister Pierre Joxe and his delegation arrived in Abu Dhabi this morning.

He was greeted by His Highness Shaykh Muhammad Bin-Zayid Al Nuhayyan, staff pilot major general, commander of the United Arab Emirates [UAE] Armed Forces; other officers; and the French ambassador.

The French minister will attend the final day of the joint UAE-French military exercises today, which feature all armed forces corps.

Republic of Yemen

Al-Bid Denies Split in Socialist Party

PM2802101292 London AL-HAYAH in Arabic 24 Feb 92 p 5

[Interview with Vice President 'Ali Salim al-Bid by Khayrallah Khayrallah in Sanaa, date not given]

[Excerpts] [Khayrallah] In your view is it lawful to hold elections after the completion of the transition period, and why do some people insist on holding them after the transition period?

[Al-Bid] First, the two (ruling) parties have no final view on that matter, and there has been no talk about a date. But we are agreed that the transition period should end as scheduled in November of this year. Between now and the move to another stage there will be no insistence on holding the elections before or after. That issue has not been raised. What is being discussed is the electoral law now being examined. A few days ago the prime minister met with party leaders and representatives to discuss their views on the law, which will be referred to the House of Representatives. The job now is to speed up the completion of the electoral law. But so far there has been no talk of when the elections should be held. We will start the implementation after the law is completed. There is no problem. [passage omitted]

[Khayrallah] How would you describe current relations between the two ruling parties, especially in view of the kind of coolness that has emerged between them in recent weeks—so much so that some people are talking about a crisis?

[Al-Bid] On the contrary, relations are developing with time, and if anyone says otherwise it means that he is in fact unfamiliar with developments. These relations face real and objective challenges. Objective difficulties always shake the people's will, whether they are one party, two parties, or more. The real will emerges when there are difficulties. We and the [General People's]

Congress are trying to unify the political will in order to tackle objective difficulties in the country. How can they—after all this—interpret the situation as a crisis? We believe that it is natural: Interpretations are natural and differences and disagreement are natural in the face of the difficulties and the evolution that the situation is experiencing daily. [passage omitted]

[Khayrallah] Does that mean that there will be alliance between the two of you during the elections?

[Al-Bid] So far our alliance is not a wish but rather a realistic and objective matter. This is because the Socialist Party and the Congress shoulder the responsibility for the major development that has occurred in Yemen, that is, unity and the introduction of the democratic line in the country. This is what is required, and none of us believes that he can by himself shoulder the responsibility for these developments. We the Congress and all the others—the nationalist and democratic parties—believe that it is important to have our alliances in order to lead the march to safety and to follow the example of those who preceded us but who could not continue. [passage omitted]

[Khayrallah] What about the divisions occurring in the party, especially in view of the statement issued by the "Fattah group" and the "11 February" leaflet? What is your opinion?

[Al-Bid] These things are very natural and should not frighten people. It is not difficult for any group to write a document. I expect other documents expressing displeasure with the party to appear. But there is nothing to cause divisions. That was possible at one point but now—under the democracy practiced by the party and the acceptance of alternative opinions—there are several views within the party.

We maintain that democracy also means that the majority heeds the minority's view. We encourage democracy within the party. The situation is different now from what it used to be. There is now nothing called democratic centralism or anything to cause a split. [passage omitted]

[Khayrallah] I asked Yemeni Reform Party leaders about the assassination of Socialist Party elements, and the reply was that these were internal Socialist Party matters, that the Reform Party had no arms or militias, and that the Socialist Party does have militias, that it arms them, and that it also has camps. What is your comment?

[Al-Bid] You are entitled to ask and to receive an answer. But we have no problem with the Reform Party, nor have we yet accused anyone in particular. All we are demanding is that the security organs and the prosecution office to play their role in identifying the culprits, whoever they may be. We have accused no one, and it is wrong to make accusations. But if the security organs worked correctly—and this is what is required, not only for us but for the country as a whole—we would have identified those responsible.

[Khayrallah] What is your opinion of the allegation that you have camps and militias which you arm?

[Al-Bid] We do not need to do that because we have an army. We are in the leadership of the security forces, the armed forces, and the government, so there is no reason for that. Why should we set up militias when I am not an oppositionist? We have said that the democratic line requires that there be no recourse to violence or to the formation of militias. We will not engage in that, and we will learn from Lebanon's experience. We will not push Yemen onto that endless road. [passage omitted]

[Khayrallah] Is the border demarcation with Oman proceeding well?

[Al-Bid] The good thing is that there are discussions and cordial contacts.

[Khayrallah] Will you sign an agreement soon?

[Al-Bid] We hope so, God willing. [passage omitted]

Saddam Makes 'Surprise Visit' to al-Kut

JN2702202792

[Editorial Report] Baghdad Republic of Iraq Radio Network in Arabic, in a linkup with Baghdad Television in Arabic, at 1807 GMT on 27 February carries a "recording" of a "surprise visit" made by President Saddam Husayn to the city of al-Kut, capital of Wasit Governorate.

The recording begins with the sound of crowds cheering and shouting slogans in support of Saddam Husayn. Then, an unidentified speaker is heard talking to Saddam about the governorate, road construction, and crops to be grown this season. He tells Saddam that produce output is expected to be larger this year. Saddam is then heard telling the official that this year is a "year of cotton," and an "excellent" year. Saddam holds a conversation with several officials, most likely the Wasit governor and other unidentified party officials. He discusses agricultural issues in the governorate, as well as other services provided by the governorate. Crowds are still heard chanting slogans, including: "Bush, Bush, listen well, we all love Saddam Husayn," and "With our lives and blood, we redeem you, Saddam."

Saddam asks, "How are the comrades?" They answer that they are all right. He then recalls riots in Wasit Governorate, and talks about the infiltration of Iranian elements into the governorate, with the help of other "hirelings," saying that it was not enough to close the doors in the face of those elements, but that "dozens of machine guns" should have come out of the doorways to decimate them.

Saddam then discusses the relationship between state and party officials and the people. He tells the Wasit officials that many officials make friends with people according to their interests, not principles. He recalls how Prophet Muhammad organized the relationship between commanders and the people. The officials reply by assuring Saddam that they are doing all they can to answer people's complaints and to provide the best services possible. Saddam cites the "foreign-Zionist-American aggression" against Iraq as a good example of the necessity for communication between officials and the masses, and the necessary assignment of roles for both. The Wasit officials assure Saddam that Wasit Governorate will continue to remain steadfast and to make sacrifices, keeping in mind the principles of its great leader, who has "amazed all traitors." They pledge that they will attain either "victory or martyrdom." Saddam tells the officials: "Make the relationship between you and the people a strong bridge of interaction. If you reach the conviction that you are convincing to your people, try to be more convincing to them. Build more. Do what pleases God, more and more. This is the basis." As for fighting, he continues, it can be prepared for whenever the need arises.

'Aziz Interviewed on Events Leading to Gulf War

First Installment

JN1902104592 Amman AL-DUSTUR in Arabic
19 Feb 92 pp 20-21

[First installment of a "dialogue" with Deputy Prime Minister Tariq 'Aziz conducted by Khayri Mansur and Nahid Hattar in Baghdad; date not given]

[Text] [AL-DUSTUR] Was it possible that your talks with Secretary Baker could have resulted in striking a deal or bringing about a compromise that might have aborted the aggression? This question was raised after you published the text of the talks, especially since it was possible to read between the lines that Secretary Baker did propose a partial deal. The text of the talks also revealed that you were clearly aware of the inevitability, size, and outcome of the aggression. How do you explain, then, the logic behind the Iraqi decision of confrontation until the end?

['Aziz] First of all, I did not go to Geneva to strike a deal with Baker. There was a U.S. suggestion to hold a meeting. Since the outbreak of the crisis, we had been proposing a dialogue with the United States and other parties concerned with the dispute to discuss all relevant issues. The United States, however, rejected the idea. President Saddam Husayn repeatedly called for a dialogue, but the U.S. side always rejected it. However, in a theatrical step, President Bush called for a meeting with the Iraqi foreign minister in Washington, and said he was determined to send the U.S. secretary of state to Baghdad. I think you are aware of what happened to that proposal. The meeting did not take place because the United States insisted that it set a date for this meeting. Then the idea of the Geneva meeting came up. I went to Geneva to explain our position directly to the U.S. secretary of state. At the outset, I told him, as you have read: We should have met at the beginning of the crisis, not now, because the meeting is now being held only days before the date you set for aggression against Iraq. I also told him that this was not the right way, diplomatically or politically, to resolve problems. It was apparent from the very start, however, that Baker did not come to talk or to reach solutions to the problems of the regions; he came to deliver a threat. I made it very clear to him that we reject threats, whatever the outcome may be. We were ready for a dialogue that would enable both of us to understand each other better, remove any misunderstanding, and resolve the problems of the region. He, of course, focused on the Kuwait situation. I told him that the events that started on and after 2 August were not a cause, but an effect of a reality that the region was suffering; namely, that the primary threat to the region and its peace, security, stability, development, and prosperity was the Israeli aggression and the fact that the Palestine question had not been resolved justly in line with international law and legitimacy. I also told him that if Iraq, with its present form, leadership, and

strength, was not an Arab country located in this particular region—suppose, for instance, that it was located in Asia or Latin America, with all its present elements—then Iraq would not find itself in such a sharp dispute with the United States. You have to figure out the cause for yourself, I added.

Originally, there was no pure quarrel between Iraq and the United States; it had to do with U.S. policy in the region, especially on the Palestine question. We have been experiencing a situation in our region for several decades that has caused several wars between us and Israel; created domestic unrest and political, economic, and social tensions; and disrupted peace, security, and economic development. All of these are, for us, substantive issues which we cannot overlook by saying that the problem lies solely in the Iraqi presence in Kuwait. I further told him that if you wish to see peace and security prevail, international law dominate, and rights restored to their legitimate owners, then let us discuss all these issues. Let us sit down with all parties concerned to find appropriate solutions. It took me quite a long time to explain this to him, because the U.S. secretary of state used to ignore this approach and insist on a single issue. He refused to have a serious discussion on other problems that we have. He also misquoted history when he said that the Arabs "launched aggression" on Israel in 1967. Therefore, you can see that I did not go to Geneva to strike a deal. It was clear to us that the decision to launch an aggression had been already made. Our own analysis, before and after 2 August, was that the decision to launch aggression against Iraq had indeed been made. If we go back to the chronological sequence of events, I can say that the final decision to launch aggression against Iraq was made in the spring of 1990.

[AL-DUSTUR] Perhaps in 1989.

['Aziz] Yes, there were preparations at the time. However, the U.S.-British decision took shape in spring 1990. At the time, the United States and Britain decided to "tackle" the Iraq issue using a nerve strike [al-darbah al-'asabiyah]. During that phase, they were looking for means—any means—to deliver the strike. They were contemplating the following questions: Would Israel be the party to deliver the strike? What would the American-British role be in such a strike? What preparations would be needed for this strike? Would such a strike be comprehensive, or would it strike only at the command? There were other similar options contemplated by the ruling quarters in the United States and Britain. These options were expressed in the Western and Israeli press, and also in various statements made here and there. Hence, we within the Iraqi command were convinced that the United States and Britain—with effective Israeli participation in terms of planning, execution, and follow-up work—had decided to strike at Iraq.

[AL-DUSTUR] We are aware that you proposed a comprehensive solution to regional conflicts. However, it seems to us, through a reading of the text of the minutes of your meeting with Baker, that Baker was explicitly and sometimes implicitly raising the prospects of a partial solution, a partial deal. The question we have in this regard is the following: Since you were fully aware of the magnitude of the strike in store for you, why did you not accept such a partial solution, since in politics, even revolutionary politics, there is room for compromise?

['Aziz] Practically speaking, there was neither a partial nor a complete solution. Iraq was required to declare abandonment of its entire program. It was clear to us that if Iraq were to go back on a single step in any direction and in any area, it would then be asked to make further retreats. I believe that circumstances in the aftermath of the aggression corroborate this fact. Numerous retreats would have been required of us, until we became devastated morally. As for political devastation, as proven in history and on the ground, it is more dangerous than a physical strike dealt to people. With regard to major issues, material losses are certainly important. Nobody can underestimate the impact of a physical strike. However, moral loss is far more dangerous, because it causes man, who is indisputably more important than matter, to be crushed. Man is more important than matter. When man retains his faith in his cause and continues to struggle to vindicate that cause, he remains in good shape. This is better than becoming politically devastated, even if this were to involve the retention of immense material possessions. We did not have any delusions regarding the alleged U.S. determination to restore the pre-2 August situation. Had this been the motive behind U.S. moves, why then had the United States targeted us before 2 August? We should never forget this fact regarding the U.S.-British-Western-Israeli strategy toward Iraq. We must not forget that Iraq was targeted prior to 2 August. Therefore, it was not possible, practically speaking, to restore things to the pre-2 August situation and then think that everything would be alright.

[AL-DUSTUR] There have been several opinions expressed by some pan-Arab circles. These circles view the Iraqi step in Kuwait as a great act of liberation. However, they believe that Iraq made several tactical mistakes in its handling of the crisis and the war. These can be summed up in the following three mistakes:

1. The noncompletion of the Kuwaiti step by other steps when this was possible.

2. The failure to withdraw at the appropriate time, before 15 January.

3. Finally, the withdrawal under bombardment, the cessation of fighting, and the acceptance of the UN Security Council resolutions. The Arab citizen does not understand this shift—the course and logic of this shift—from an absolute no to yes.

['Aziz] From the time of the aggression until now, many questions of this kind have been put to us. Here, I would like to focus on the issue of "expansion." In Kuwait, Iraq waged a defensive battle in terms of the nature and the

results of the battle. Iraq did not go to Kuwait with regional expansionist objectives.

[Al-DUSTUR] This is justified on the pan-Arab level?

['Aziz] Yes, yes. I am telling you that I am a nationalist Arab, a Ba'thist, and an Arab Socialist Ba'th Party National Command member. I believe in Arab unity. There is no doubt about this. I am talking about the nature of the Iraqi political decision. The nature of the 2 August 1990 decision was a defensive one. This means that at that time, there was an "entity," from a legal point of view, adjacent to us. This entity, "Kuwait," was premeditatedly used—in accordance with a despicable plan—to destroy Iraq economically, as a prelude to liquidating it as a military force confronting Israel, and equal to Israel. In accordance with the legal logic observed by man throughout history, the victim of aggression, who is threatened without any justification, has the right to defend himself. The rulers of Kuwait had no justifications to threaten Iraq by this mean method: To seek to destroy it economically. They had no justification at all. On the contrary, they should have showed concern for Iraq's security and prosperity, whether for pan-Arab reasons or in accordance with the strategic logic, the logic of mutual pan-Arab interests. We did not have a conflict of interests with the rulers of Kuwait. They executed a Western-American-Israeli conspiracy to destroy an Arab country. This is why we attacked them. We attacked this conspiratorial entity, and as we explained at the time, we attacked it to correct a historical mistake; namely, that this part which is called "Kuwait" is basically a piece of Iraq which was cut from it during the British colonialist hegemony. This is what happened. Iraq, as a country and a constitutional entity; and we, as a constitutional leadership of Iraq, did not have the objective of expanding even one single inch outside our country. Yes, we are advocates of unity, and our hope is to achieve Arab unity.

It was not our plan to achieve unity through military invasion. Besides, within the command of the Arab Socialist Ba'th Party, we do not advocate military invasion as a means to achieve unity. This is because unity is more complex than military invasion. It is an all-embracing historical process. Consequently, we had no intention of going into Kuwait prior to 2 August. We were compelled to go into Kuwait in a defensive move meant to strike the aggressor, to strike the entity used to conspire against us. Our move into Kuwait was a defensive one. The proposal that we made was meant to allow the problem to be made clear on the Arab and world scenes. Goodwill on the Arab and world scenes should have pooled its endeavors to tackle the situation. As a matter of course, it is quite clear that Western countries on the world scene did not demonstrate a desire to tackle regional problems peacefully. There was a determination to strike the region by striking at Iraq. The potential for a renaissance in Iraq was to be attacked to secure its submission. The other fact, which became unequivocally clear, is that a number of Arab regimes were proven to be treasonous in the full sense of the word. This is a fact that should be carefully examined by thinkers, analysts, and politicians, who must ponder this fact and draw the proper conclusions from it. Here we must be honest to history, because this is important. In the twenties, thirties, forties, and fifties, there were some Arab regimes which collaborated with colonial powers. This is something that we experienced. These regimes concluded treaties with the colonial powers, accepted their interference, and condoned foreign influence. We, the Arab nationalists who waged the battle for Arab national liberation, called these regimes treasonous regimes. Undoubtedly, some persons within these regimes were agents who colluded with foreigners. However, the enormity of the treason shown by a number of Arab regimes in the aftermath of 2 August posed immense peril to the Arabs and the Arab future graver than the perils posed by old regimes. There was an active, stubborn, strong, and insolent determination—albeit masked with covers provided by the Western media—to strike at the Arab future.

Whether the strike was justified or not, the conspiracy was revealed, particularly after what happened. It was clear that Iraq's pan-Arab goal was to remove this treasonous situation through Arab struggle, not for Iraq to deal with it militarily. I do not think that the results would have been tactically better had Iraq used more military force. Had this happened, things would appear as though Iraq was using its military power to expand at the expense of others. Here, for the present and the future, the issue had better remain in its principled substance, even though there might be a temporary material loss. The battle for Arab independence and awakening is indeed continuing. What happened is only one of its chapters, which was not the last. It is certainly not the first, nor should it be the closing chapter. It is only one chapter in a continuing process of struggle for Arab independence and awakening. Therefore, it was, and remains, necessary to maintain the purity of principles and maintain harmony between principles and practical steps.

[AL-DUSTUR] To stress the second part of the question, let us ask: Why did you not retreat before 15 January, and why did you do so later?

['Aziz] After 15 January, a battle took place. Before 15 January, however, retreat was governed by many factors, especially political factors relating to actual and future realities. I said that retreating before 15 January would have meant a political collapse and demoralization of the Arab front. This collapse would not stop at a certain limit. There is no limit for it. America, Israel, and the West would not be satisfied with a single tactical retreat. When you make one tactical retreat, you will be asked to make a second, a third, and so on. This means you have politically surrendered and lost your cause, before you even had a chance to fight. After 15 January, however, a military battle took place. This battle is governed by its own own laws. You have an army with certain combat capabilities. The will to fight is there; it did not change. The will of confrontation of the Iraqi individual and

leadership also did not change. However, facts and circumstances on the front necessitated the decision to withdraw. When, for example, you have military units and you are no longer able to dispatch the necessary requirements for them because of the massive air assault, then it is the responsibility of the commander to withdraw these units to a safe haven. When that happened, they stopped the war, the military chapter of the aggression. We did not ask for that. This is what happened.

This, I think, explains the difference between the meaning of our withdrawal before or after 15 January. Our withdrawal before 15 January, of our free will, would have been a complete political defeat for us. After 15 January, our withdrawal was governed by military facts on the ground. Here, we realize the meaning of the historical political dictum: "You might lose a battle, but not a war..." But political defeat means a defeat in the war waged by the Arab nation for its independence and awakening. Let us go back to Arab history. We were militarily defeated in 1967. The political decision, however, was to pursue confrontation and struggle. This led to the emergence of Palestinian resistance, which was, at the time, a very strong national struggle phenomenon; as well as the outbreak of other revolutions in the region, including the 17-30 July revolution in Iraq. The decision of confrontation also gave a new political and military impetus and vitality to the Egyptian regime under 'Abd-al-Nasir that enabled Egypt to fight the war in 1973. Had President 'Abd-al-Nasir been alive, things would have been different.

What happened is that the al-Sadat regime wasted the military success which was achieved in 1973 in a political defeat that he himself sought. He defeated himself politically, and he also defeated the Arab nation politically. We must be cautious here and not fall into the trap of analysis of a narrow technical nature. The important thing is not to be defeated politically. In other words, you must not choose to go back on your cause, to hand it over to the enemy, and to say: I have had enough and I will not continue; or there is no use, as some base-minded writers and journalists, who are hired by the West, say. They also say: We are impotent, and as an Arab nation we should accept the fait accompli, and we should capitulate; or that there is a new world order, and therefore we should submit to it. This is false realism. Of course, it is necessary to be realistic in principled political action. This does not mean, however, that you should relinquish your right as a human being and as a nation to be independent and to realize awakening. Among the factors of awakening is the factor of unity, for unity is a kind of awakening. Let us take the examples of some nations, such as Japan and Germany. These nations were defeated militarily in World War II. However, because they safeguarded their will of awakening, they are now restoring their international positions. The important thing is to maintain the political will and the political program.

[AL-DUSTUR] If you compare the results of the 1967 war to those of the recent war, you will find that the 1967 war produced several positive changes on the Arab level, the most important of which you have mentioned. But now, after Iraq has stood in the face of aggression for more than a year, the only significant thing that has occurred is the direct negotiations between the Arabs and Israel. Is the time still not ripe for reactions similar to those which followed the 1967 war, or is it the change in the international circumstances?

['Aziz] The change in the international situation is reflected on the region. In 1967, there was still an Eastern camp opposed to the Western camp. This Eastern camp helped the Arab side politically and militarily. The USSR decided to compensate Egypt for its military losses in arms and equipment. The USSR's political role used to curb American-Western-Israeli arrogance. This factor no longer exists. The Arabs now have no international ally. At the United Nations and in international forums, the Egyptian envoy used to go with a "team" of the socialist states' representatives to vote in favor of his draft resolution. Certainly, this has negative effects on our Arab situation in general, and on Iraq's situation in particular, due to the blockade. We do not have an ally at the UN Security Council which would stop unjust and repressive measures against us. The direct result of the absence of an international ally is weakness. However, in the long run, this absence will produce self-reliance. It is like a human being. When a child loses his father he loses a great support in his life, in his school, in his livelihood, and in facing dangers. However, if this child has a strong will, his character will be stronger than that of the child who is protected by his father. This applies to nations. Yes, the nation which relies on itself will suffer a great deal, just like the orphan. I am quoting my personal experience. I experienced this situation. My father died when I was seven years old. Because of this, I can understand this situation on the personal level, as well as on the objective level. In the first stages, man suffers bitterly. However, he grows up totally different from the protected child.

In numerous cases, especially in the sixties and seventies, we Arabs shirked our national and pan-Arab responsibilities and expected the Soviet Union to shoulder them for us. When the Soviet Union failed to make a specific move we wanted it to make, we criticized the Soviets, saying they had failed to come to our rescue. We failed to honor our own responsibilities. Arab independence and Arab renaissance are Arab affairs, are they not? We are supposed to accomplish these from A to Z, regardless of whether or not we have allies, and whether or not we have friends. We have to do it by ourselves. If we have allies and friends, all is well and good. Moreover, this enhances fraternal ties among world peoples. However, if we lack allies and friends, we should not use this as a pretext to justify our failure to make efforts in this regard. This is because such a failure on our part would render us a nation that abandons its right to progress and renaissance. We must work to effect renaissance, using our own potential.

[AL-DUSTUR] Iraq is currently going through a powerful experience in this regard; namely, the reconstruction experience. Reconstruction during the blockade prompted Iraq to depend on Iraqi cadres and Iraqi technological capabilities, and to lay the foundations for a self-reliant construction plan, that might be different from what used to be done in this regard.

['Aziz] Let me give you an example. The periodic maintenance of the power stations built by foreign firms 10 years ago used to be performed by the same foreign firms that built them. We did not have the capability to perform periodic maintenance on them. The same Iraqi cadres who worked at these stations in 1991 rebuilt them. Reconstruction is more difficult than construction. This is because there is a difference between building a new installation and repairing and rebuilding a destroyed one. The process of reconstruction is bound to be more complicated and difficult. Yet we succeeded in this regard. We managed to rebuild power stations which, in the past, used to be maintained by foreign firms. This was the result of mobilizing all of our intrinsic potential. It is impossible to be creative, to achieve an objective in this regard, and to reach a high level of sophistication in terms of thinking and performance when the assistance of foreign experts is available.

[AL-DUSTUR] But this poses a big question. The immense accomplishments made by Iraq in the field of reconstruction, in the aftermath of the barbaric aggression and under the blockade, are to be attributed to the public sector. Will then this great success achieved by the public sector prompt you to reconsider the privatization trend?

['Aziz] The private sector in Iraq was, always has been, and will remain—according to scientific and conceptual economic thought—a secondary rather than a primary sector. The primary sector in Iraq was, has been, and will always remain the public sector, or what we call the socialist sector. What have we privatized? For instance, at a certain point in the seventies we built a production plant designed to produce all types of alcohol. What benefit can the country draw from this plant? Economically speaking, does the country need to build such a plant? What I want to say is that a minister or a group of specialists deemed it appropriate at a certain point to establish a plant to produce alcohol, and this was put into effect. At a certain phase, specialists in the agricultural sector said that it was appropriate to build cow production farms modeled on the Soviet sovkhozes and kolkhozes, which were failing experiments. At the time, they were failing experiments. However, we had some people who were amazed by the superficial results of this experiment. They wanted to launch a similar experiment in Iraq, viewing it as a type of socialism. Then we saw the failure of this experiment. So, why should the government raise cows? Why should it not leave this task to the private sector? This does not mean that we are abandoning the socialist option or the public sector. The socialist sector is made up of electricity and heavy as well as medium industries. First, our decision in this regard is to adhere to these areas and to develop them. Second, there is no capital in Iraq that can take the place of the country's capital. But, is it the state's duty to sell cigarettes and to open cigarette kiosks?

[AL-DUSTUR] This is not what we meant. We were asking about the general socioeconomic trend?

['Aziz] The private sector has its role in small and medium businesses, not in major trade. Before the blockade, the government imported wheat, sugar, and basic food commodities. Today, this is still the government's responsibility. The government also defines the prices, which are also subsidized, in order to maintain an accepted standard of living for the people. The government also deals in the large equipment trade, because of the high profit and the clear pattern this business entails.

On the other hand, the government does not intervene in importing items such as toothpaste, razor blades, and pencils. The government becomes tired and makes mistakes in dealing with such commodities. The government should not intervene in the private sector's business, such as services, restaurants, and small and intermediate tourist facilities. In industry for example, you need a petrochemical factory, and at the same time, you need a factory for plastic trash cans. Why should the public sector be in charge of both factories? The public sector produces the raw material in a petrochemical factory and gives it to the private sector to produce plastic items in a small factory, in which 20 or 30 workers are employed.

[AL-DUSTUR] People noticed that a new class of war profiteers appeared in Iraq; and at the same time, the living standards of the majority declined. Does this call for concern over the general socioeconomic trend?

['Aziz] This is caused by the blockade. The main reason is the blockade. The president said in his speech at the party congress: In Iraq, public funds are in the hands of the government. These public funds were always used in the interests of the poor people in Iraqi society. They were also used in development. When, for example, the price of chicken become high, we issued a decision to import quantities of chicken and to sell them in the market at reasonable prices. Thus, we will make a balance in the prices in the interest of the consumers, the majority of whom are poor people. What happened is that these public funds are not available as in the past. Consequently, merchants and speculators found a big opportunity to raise the prices with a degree of freedom that did not exist in the past. Yes, we are still in power and practice our authority, but economic authority is complicated. You cannot practice this authority by issuing orders. You can fix the price of one kilo of chicken at 10 dinars, but the merchant will hide this commodity and not sell it. We might put him in prison, but no chicken will be sold in the market; this item will then be sold secretly. No authority can follow up on these details. Therefore, the absence of public funds produced the phenomena you mentioned. The second reason is the

decline in the currency exchange rate. Since the government is not receiving its revenues in hard currency, a situation will emerge in which Iraqi currency will become weak, and then inflation will emerge.

[AL-DUSTUR] The reasons are clear. Social tension remains high, brought on by an irresponsible extravagance on the one hand, and truly difficult living conditions on the other. Is there not any means to tackle the living conditions of the majority?

['Aziz] If we review the resolutions of the recent party congress, which was held last September, we find that they mainly address this issue. Barring the reconstruction drive, which is a jihad-like process and a large-scale technical-administrative operation, this issue constitutes the main occupation of the state; that is, how to achieve balance wherever you can, be it through increasing salaries for low-income people, controlling prices that can be controlled, providing basic goods for Iraqis, or tracking down hoarders through legal and administrative means wherever possible. Here, we must admit that in our society, and in all societies, it is difficult to control prices effectively if you cannot set a balance between prices and products, be they domestic or imported commodities. But what can the state do outside this? We are doing our best.

[AL-DUSTUR] Mr. 'Aziz, I would like to return to a question related to what you said a while ago, about principles and politics in the pragmatic sense. Postrevolution Iraq has always found itself in a dilemma between either commitment to principles or to politics in the pragmatic sense. Most often, Iraq set a concept for victory and defeat. In order to achieve progress and win the future, we accepted no concessions or retreats, although that could have spared Iraq the strike. Does Iraq realize that there is a third alternative to either victory or defeat—a tragic alternative in the lives of people, or a gainful loss for the sake of the future? The other part of the question is about the guests, who were released to confront states such as the United States and the West, which are void of any morality.

['Aziz] Throughout history, nations have had destinies. If you read the history of humanity, you will find that some countries, some peoples, some nations had things which were traditionally called destinies. Iraq is part of the Arab nation. However, this part of the Arab nation has not experienced intermediate circumstances. For example, Iraq has not lived 100 years under secure, stable, normal, and unchanging circumstances. Iraq either lived in great prosperity, or it was under a direct and violent invasion. This is Iraq's destiny. This is our destiny. When I read the history of Iraq, I do not find an age when Iraq experienced an intermediate, stable situation—except perhaps for a few years that cannot serve as a rule. Iraq has never been consistently in the middle, where it would neither be very strong nor under foreign invasion; or where it would be neither very rich nor looted by foreigners. Iraq has always been either a bright and influential cultural center in the region, or attacked by foreign powers. This will continue for dozens or even hundreds of years. This is our destiny. Some pillars of Iraq's prosperity have been destroyed. However, it is wrong to imagine that these pillars have been liquidated, or to imagine that the chapter of Iraq's prosperity has come to an end. It is wrong to imagine that. As we said, prosperity is made by human beings, and the human beings are there. Not all the material achievements have been destroyed. There are material achievements which continue to exist, and which are not covered by the UN Security Council resolutions. Man creates material gains. If you have the scientific and technological capability to invent, you will invent.

The head of the Special Committee and director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency visited us months ago. He said: You spent billions of dollars on your nuclear program; this cannot be an investment for purposes of scientific research. You spent these billions to produce a nuclear weapon. I answered: No, you are blowing things out of proportion. What is the economic investment in sending a rocket to the moon? Why did the Soviets spend billions to send a rocket into space? The Americans in particular are businessmen. Why do they send rockets to the moon? What did they get from the moon? They got stones they could not sell. However, this was an economic investment because they developed communications, medicine, the use of fuel, and other things. All these things they later used in the economy. The money they spent sending rockets into space returned to them through other channels. I told him: Now we are picking the fruits of our investments in Iraq's nuclear program. All the technicians who worked in this program later repaired the refineries and power stations. How many millions of dollars would we have needed to repair the refineries and power stations? Hundreds and even billions of dollars. These technicians rebuilt them by transforming the rubble into machines generating power and producing fuel.

[AL-DUSTUR] Could the self-reliance option develop into an integrated policy, as the Egyptian thinker Samir Amin envisgaes—ending complete reliance on oil, severing relations with the world capitalist system, reducing imports to a minimum, and realizing an agricultural revolution that would end imports of food from abroad? Could it transform industry from projects based on foreign technology and materials into national projects relying on local technology, based on copying, developing, and innovating; and on local materials leading to a complete agricultural-mineral-industrial cycle to realize separation from world capitalism?

In the last two decades, Iraq, relying on oil revenues, built projects by importing technology and materials, and sometimes workers—projects that can be called "complete and ready." Does the Iraqi leadership now think of exploiting Iraqi expertise in the battle of reconstruction to crystallize the comprehensive self-reliance approach, including the abandonment of the "complete

and ready" projects and adopting Iraqi projects implemented by the Iraqis, based on Iraqi ideas and in accordance with Iraqi needs?

['Aziz] What we did was this. It is true that at one stage, during the seventies, most of our big projects were built in accordance with the "complete and ready" formula. However, in every project, we introduced Iraqi crews to operate the project. Our projects were "complete and ready" as far as the construction was concerned, but not in terms of operation. We made it a condition that any foreign company executing a project in Iraq should train Iraqi crews to operate the project. These crews entered the project from the beginning of construction until they eventually took over the project upon completion. At the same time, Iraqi groups went for training abroad and obtained wider and deeper knowledge, and returned to work in our projects. Yes, we invested the oil money at a time when it was turning into smoke if it was not used quickly. This means that if the dollar dropped by five cents, we lost two factories. The oil shaykhs lost billions because they piled their money in foreign banks. They would deposit one billion dollars with 1974 purchasing power, but its purchasing power would be different in 1975. However, the factory you bought "complete and ready" in 1974 remained an asset. You did not lose anything but you made a profit in one year because the factory price rose. Therefore, we invested the oil revenues in "complete and ready" factories, because we wanted to buy as much of the means of production as we could. We invested money that would otherwise have evaporated, and bought firm assets whose value actually increased.

[AL-DUSTUR] Is there any possibility of moving to the second stage of self-reliance, in light of your successful confrontation of the blockade?

['Aziz] I believe it is difficult to achieve total self-reliance in a state economy. This is possible to a large extent on a pan-Arab level. It is impossible for any Arab country to supply itself with everything it needs, but it is possible on the Arab homeland level. For example, we have an iron and steel industry but do not have iron ore. Iron ore exists in Algeria. It has not been discovered yet in Iraq. While there is phosphate in Iraq and Jordan that can meet the needs of half of the Arab homeland, in addition to the quantities that exist in Morocco, Syria and Lebanon lack it. So, it is difficult to build a purely national industry when it needs raw materials and machinery. When you are a good salesman, you will become a good buyer and a good user of what you buy. What is the surplus you achieve here? When you take iron ore and process it locally, the surplus you achieve will be a national profit. This will save hard currency and also save you the expenses of buying processed commodities.

[AL-DUSTUR] Let us return to the issue of the guests. Why were they released?

['Aziz] At the beginning, the Americans talked about a surgical strike. So we decided to keep some of these guests to prevent the strike. But this issue was exploited on a large scale by the hostile states. We decided to prevent the guests from leaving and to put them in certain places. This was an exceptional measure, but we did not treat them as hostages. They were not hostages. We took care of them and we allowed their families, the press, and television teams to visit and meet with them. When the issue was exploited on a large scale, we decided that the exploitation would have a negative impact on our cause. We had a just cause and a just solution to the region's problems. The guests issue would have harmed our cause. In order to foil the plans of our enemies, who succeeded in stirring their people's sentiments against the Arab nation as a result of the guests, we ended the issue. If the guests had remained in Iraq, the West would have committed a crime against them and would have held Iraq responsible. Their presence in Iraq would not have prevented aggression, and the West would have killed them during the aggression.

Second Installment

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[Second installment of a "dialogue" with Deputy Prime Minister Tariq 'Aziz conducted by Khayri Mansur and Nahid Hattar in Baghdad; date not given]

[Text] [AL-DUSTUR] Several signs have recently been observed—whether through discussions, articles in newspapers, plans to form a new party by a leftist group, etc.—that indicate your intention to create an active political and democratic life as required under Iraq's current circumstances. Fear and negativism, however, have also been observed. How are you going to overcome this? What are the broad outlines of your program to entrench Iraqi democracy?

['Aziz] First of all, we have taken an important step to help create a political and democratic life by enacting a law on political parties that allows nationalists—be they rightists, leftists, or socialists—to legitimately engage in party and political activity. This law was passed several months ago. No one, however, has thus far applied to establish a party. I think, though, that party nuclei might get moving shortly.

The other step in this direction is legislating a new law for the press. What remains is the Constitution. We were planning to propose a new Iraqi constitution to be discussed in the beginning of 1992, after the aggression had stopped and we made large strides in our reconstruction effort. In April 1991, talks also started with the Kurdistan Front. We were planning, after reaching a solution to the Kurdish question, to move ahead with a general national discussion of the political situation in the country as a whole, with the participation of the Kurdistan Front, since it is part of the Iraqi side.

Last August, however, the Kurdistan Front stopped the dialogue and did not sign the agreement we had reached with the front's delegation, under Mas'ud Barzani. After

that, we were asked: Are we going to hold a general discussion on the future of the nation's political process without the Kurdistan Front, or are we to wait for its decision? We have still not been able to answer this question.

[AL-DUSTUR] The problem is that this decision is linked to foreign powers.

['Aziz] Yes. This is exactly the problem. We had reached a final agreement with the Kurdistan Front's delegation under Mas'ud Barzani. Later, Barzani left to acquaint the Kurdish leadership with the agreement and receive its approval. Here, Jalal Talabani openly insisted on getting Washington's approval of the agreement. In Washington, in an official session, they were told that this is an internal Iraqi affair. After the session, however, they were told to reject the agreement. The agreement is ideal. This is how it was described by Kurdish leaders. It demonstrates one of the finest kinds of autonomy within a single homeland. We did respond to the legitimate demands of the Kurdistan Front. Actually, the Iraqi leadership even responded to some of the demands which were not quite legitimate or logical, but they have reasons that made the leadership lenient toward them. In short, the Kurdish delegation was greatly pleased. The U.S. Administration, however, which is still plotting to topple the regime in Iraq, wants to use the situation in the north to shake the country. In this context, they are using the Kurdistan Front as a tool. The Kurds know this. During our talks in Baghdad, they told us frankly that they were being used as a tool against us. They were not happy about it. At least, this is what they said. I think there are other agents.

[AL-DUSTUR] To what extent can the average Kurd ignore the Kurdistan Front, especially in the wake of popular demands for the restoration of state authority in northern Iraq?

['Aziz] The Kurdish masses need some time to discover that these are not Kurdish nationalists, but rather foreign agents working at the expense of the Iraqi Kurds' interests.

[AL-DUSTUR] Let us return to the issue of democracy. You have spoken of legal steps. However, the issue of democracy involves more far-reaching and complex aspects, the heart of which could be the issue of national reconciliation among the parties to the Iraqi national movement.

['Aziz] We told everybody that we are ready for dialogue. Every request for a meeting with a party, command, or state official, meant to initiate dialogue on the political situation, is immediately granted.

[AL-DUSTUR] There are fears. Right now, you need opposition.

['Aziz] Immediately after the (Iraq-Iran) war—that is, after we had healed the war wounds and reconstructed al-Basrah and al-Faw—we started in 1989 to speak openly of pluralism. The war ended and hostilities ceased in July 1988. The remaining six months of the year were used to reconstruct al-Basrah and al-Faw. In early 1989, we began to openly discuss the issue of pluralism within the party and leadership structures. We formed committees tasked with drafting a constitution in early 1989. Technical work lasted one year. In any such endeavor, there is both technical work and political work. Within the command, we accomplished the political aspect of this. We drew up broad outlines and gave them to jurists, who began the process of drafting the constitution. By the end of 1989, the preparation of files regarding the constitution was complete. We began a process of reviewing these files on the political level once again. A second review was also conducted. In spring 1990, we began to debate the constitution in public. We began to distribute a draft of the constitution among party organizations, associations, unions, and the National Assembly. All this occurred before the start of the American-Atlantic aggression. Why, then, do they [not further identified] draw these conclusions. This is an inaccurate conclusion.

[AL-DUSTUR] With respect to the Iraqi opposition, it has become clear now to al' political observers that the opposition can be divided into two categories. Opposition elements who fall in the first category have become an organic part of the enemy camp, and have been used as such. However, there is still part of the opposition that seeks national reconciliation. Some of those who belong to the second category came to Baghdad in February, when the city was the target of bombing attacks. Some of them are preparing for similar visits to Baghdad. Some are hesitant, and consequently might need additional guarantees.

['Aziz] We met whomever wanted to meet with us from among these people, who were in previous years critical of the regime. First, an amnesty was declared, as is well-known. From the legal point of view, none of these people is being sought by official authorities. With regard to the political aspect of this, we informed our ambassadors that they should be ready to issue passports to any opposition figure who calls them expressing a desire to return to Iraq. We do not have money to give, but we are ready to provide passports and other facilities. We are ready to provide them with the requirements for returning to Iraq. Some time ago, an opposition figure contacted me and informed me that some brothers were coming to Iraq. He added: It is true that an amnesty was issued. I was afraid, however, that they might encounter some difficulties in Tirbil. I contacted the Public Security commander and told him that these people, whose names were such and such, would be coming; inform your personnel not to obstruct their return. From the legal point of view, there is nothing to prevent their return.

Right now, there is confrontation between Iraq under the Ba'th Party, on the one hand, and the United States and its allies on the other. If this confrontation ends in success for Iraq—we are sure that this will be the

case—what role can they then play in the country's national life? Iraqis will ask where they were during the war and the reconstruction drive. Furthermore, they will say: We are the ones who were engaged in the confrontation. The person entitled to play a role is the one who showed up during the confrontation. In the future, when these figures run for office in elections, nobody will elect them. Now they are waiting to see whether or not the regime will be toppled. If the regime is toppled—of course, this is not a likely possibility—they will deal with the new regime. If the regime is not toppled, and if it succeeds until the confrontation ends, then what will these figures have to say to the people?

Will they issue newspapers, saying: We were sitting and observing the situation, and we want to play a role now that the confrontation has ended? If they were to do this, nobody would elect them. The people are facing a harsh ordeal and a fateful experience—a matter which renders these people's false skills of persuasion useless.

[AL-DUSTUR] Does it follow from this that the Iraq-Iran war caused some Iraqi political currents and parties to be excluded from the grace of pluralism and the law legalizing the formation of parties, especially the currents that played no role in the war?

['Aziz] Yes, the currents affiliated with Iran cannot be sanctioned. Iran fought us and expressed an expansionist tendency detrimental to our country. It still has ambitions on Iraq. How can we legalize a party that is loyal and subservient to Iran? This would be similar to a Nazi party having been legalized in France during World War II.

[AL-DUSTUR] Will the Iraqi Communist Party be excluded from the grace of pluralism?

['Aziz] No, the Communist Party will not be excluded from the grace of pluralism. Jalal Talabani asked me in July about the parties that we will authorize and allow to take part in political activities, and whether the Communist Party will be one of these parties. I answered: Yes, provided that this party does not advocate atheism in its platform, because there is a stipulation in the law on parties prohibiting atheism. When Talabani inquired about his right to form a party, I answered him, saying: Yes, you have the right to do so. You can obtain a license for this from the Ministry of the Interior.

[AL-DUSTUR] The last days of the war are still an enigma. As for the average Arab, he is still asking the following question: What happened during those days? There are some who believe that a certain deal was struck with the Americans.

['Aziz] For your information, no agreement was struck with the Americans. They declared a cease-fire, which we observed. According to the agreement reached with Gorbachev on the cease-fire, we approved withdrawal and handing over the prisoners of war within four days, and accepted Resolution 660, provided that the blockade was lifted and that the subsequent resolutions, issued due to the failure to implement Resolution 660, were revoked. The Americans are the party which began the aggression, using advanced technology and weapons that had nothing to do with man to man [preceding phrase in English] fighting with Iraqis. They started their ground offensive only after their weapons, which have nothing to do with confrontation, had played their full role in harming the people, the country, and military units. An American invasion of Iraq was bound to bring about man to man [preceding phrase in English] fighting. Let us presume that the Americans' objective was to reach Baghdad; this would have required them to occupy all the Iraqi cities leading to Baghdad. In such a situation, they would have been required to fight as men and to even engage in hand-to-hand combat. They were afraid of this. When the confrontation with us started, the results were different from those obtained during the air bombardment.

[AL-DUSTUR] Are the Americans concealing any information?

['Aziz] They cannot admit that they were afraid to face the Iraqis man to man [preceding phrase in English]. Had the Americans been confident that they could advance toward Baghdad without sustaining heavy losses, they would have done so. Bush would have achieved all his objectives. But he was afraid of confrontation. Up until the last day of the battle between the Republican Guards and U.S. forces, the Iraqi Army proved very efficient in combat. This forced Bush to withdraw, and to send aircraft that bombarded Iraq from a distance of 70 km.

[AL-DUSTUR] What were the real U.S. losses in the war, especially since the figures they have released sound incredulous?

['Aziz] I have no official information. Perhaps the facts will be disclosed in the future, because they cannot hide them forever.

[AL-DUSTUR] The Americans said that only around 200 Americans were killed.

['Aziz] One year after the U.S. invasion of Panama, NEWSWEEK published information about U.S. losses in Panama that was not previously known.

[AL-DUSTUR] What is the truth about Iraqi losses?

['Aziz] There are no statistics. We are not in a stage of statistics. There is also some confusion because of transportation difficulties. Also, the chapter of treachery and treason resulted in many deaths. So things are confused as to the number of victims.

[AL-DUSTUR] There is a clear foreign basis for the violence in the south. However, the degree of this violence indicated the influence of local social factors. Is this due to a sectarian wound?

['Aziz] The period that witnessed these events was the most turbulent in the life of the Iraqis. The Iraqis had

lived under shelling for 40 days. If we suppose, for the sake of argument, that the people who incited the riots had done so a year earlier or a year later, the level of violence would have been much less. The psychology of people at the time made them very tense. Also, the largest contingent of those who participated in the riots were with party cadres linked to the Iranian leadership.

[AL-DUSTUR] To what extent did the acts of violence, and what happened later, create a deep sectarian wound in Iraqi society?

['Aziz] If you exclude the Iranian side, we do not have sectarianism in Iraq. There are sects, but these have served to enrich the Iraqi personality. Iraqi society is known for peaceful sectarian coexistence. It is not strange, therefore, to find a Sunni with a Shiite neighbor on his right and a Christian neighbor on his left; or to find a Sunni married to a Shiite, or vice versa.

Take Mosul, for example. The majority of the population there are Sunnis, but still, it is quite normal to see a Shiite who has been living there for the past 30 years. In Baghdad in the 1920's, the majority of the old neighborhoods were divided on a sectarian basis. This situation no longer exists. When political parties were set up in Iraq, they were not established along sectarian lines. It happened once Salih Jabr established an organization which, it was said, enjoyed the support of the Shiite community. However, his opponent, Nuri al-Sa'id, was supported by the leaders of the most influential Shiite tribes. Salih Jabr also had some Sunnis on his side, although these people were playing the Lebanon game, which was despised by the masses. On the same topic, the leader of the Iraqi Communist Party was a Christian named Yusuf Salman, who was also known as Fahd. The leader of the Independence Party, which represented the pan-Arab line, was a Shiite named Muhammad Mahdi Kubbah, who belonged to a well-known Shiite family. The leader of the Democratic National Party, which had a liberal and regional orientation, was a Sunni. Al-Rukabi, the secretary of Arab Socialist Ba'th Party during the 1950's, was a Shiite. I do not recall in the 1950's thst we were joining parties or attending mass rallies along sectarian lines. True, there are Shiites and Sunnis. You see the Shiites celebrate Muharram; and the Sunnis make the ceremonial visit to the shrine of Shaykh Abd-al-Qadir, a student of Abi-Hanifah, but this did not lead to political division within Iraqi society. It has never been reported in Iraq that problems broke out between Sunni and Shiite neighborhoods, not even on family or social grounds. Also, there has never been a Muslim attack against Christians.

[AL-DUSTUR] What is Iran's role in all of this?

['Aziz] I told you that if you exclude the Iranian side, there is no sectarian problem in Iraq. There is a variety of sects.

[AL-DUSTUR] The Shiites have fought in defense of their country?

['Aziz] If they did not fight, we would have lost the war.

[AL-DUSTUR] How does this point affect the prospects for relations with Iran?

['Aziz] As long as the Iranian regime maintains expansionist desires against Iraq and the region, it is difficult to build any kind of relationship with that regime. We are trying to convince them, through reason and dialogue, that their expansionist objectives are not only wrong, but also impossible to achieve, and will only lead to weakening the region and the Islamic front vis-a-vis the West. The bloodshed that resulted from the Iranian aggression against Iraq, because of Khomeyni's expansionist desire, weakened the Muslims vis-a-vis the West. Iran, however, still insists on its course, and still harbors dreams of weakening Iraq. That devious course prevents the establishment of normal relations between Iraq and Iran, despite the fact that all objective factors for the establishment of ties, based on mutual respect and noninterference in internal affairs, are there.

I went to Tehran in 1990, early in the blockade against Iraq, and explained to the Iranians that it was in their best interest to buy our oil products. They were buying oil products from abroad, because their refineries had been damaged in the war. I told them that we in Iraq had a surplus of those products, and could sell to them at low prices, and so both sides would benefit. But the policy pursued by the Iranian regime was neither logical nor a reflection of a nation's interests; it reflected only expansionist ambitions.

[AL-DUSTUR] You had historical relations with the former USSR. Do you intend to reorganize these relations with the Russian Federation, now that the USSR has disintegrated?

['Aziz] We hope so. We are in touch with the Islamic republics, and an Iraqi technical delegation is visiting them.

[AL-DUSTUR] Is it possible for these republics to break the blockade against Iraq?

['Aziz] These republics are still new, searching for their own interests. But with regard to Russia's foreign policy, it is very much influenced by the West and Israel.

[AL-DUSTUR] We would like to ask you about the prospects for relations with Japan and Europe, in light of the growing contradiction between these two sides and the United States?

['Aziz] There have been no practical steps. But the Arabs in general, and the Iraqis in particular, have an interest in developing relations with those blocs and with the countries that have a political-economic future. But as far as Iraq is concerned, Japan and Europe are pursuing policies similar to that of the United States—relatively milder, but essentially the same. We have explained our position: We do not want to antagonize them. The Arabs and the Iraqis did not opt to antagonize them. Therefore, they have to change their policies. Japan, for example,

has thus far not released a single dollar of the frozen Iraqi assets. Willingly or unwillingly, these countries are still influenced by U.S. policy. We can talk about this in the future. But we hope that our relations with them will be normal, based on our independence; not on turning us, as a country and a nation, into a farm for their own interests.

[AL-DUSTUR] Your media and cultural role is well known in Iraq and the Arab world. How free can Iraqi writers be in expressing details of what happened, so as to play their historical role free from traditional media restrictions?

['Aziz] I do not recall a single incident where a writer presented a book for publication but was not allowed to do so. Many people expect us to write or publish things. I was personally asked why I did not write or speak. I told them that they can write, but we have our views concerning timing—something that I care about. Concerning the right time for saying what should be said, this is linked to circumstances and time. You know that many books about the Gulf war were published; most are bad, some are ill-intentioned, and the well-intentioned ones depend on rumors and stories.

[AL-DUSTUR] Among the books written about the Gulf war was one by Primakov. What do you think of it?

['Aziz] I recently gave my opinion of this book. I withheld comment on the book to deny the Soviet Government—before it expired—ammunition to hurt us. His book is so much humbug, and should deceive no one. In his first visit to Baghdad in October 1990, he had no specific program. He brought along general ideas. He heard his excellency the president, and then travelled to Paris, Washington, and London. He returned with the American position, which he presented to us lock, stock, and barrel. He hardly said anything to us that we had not heard Bush, Thatcher, or Mitterrand say. Primakov said: If you withdraw from Kuwait, an Arab summit will be held to sort out your problems. What kind of solution is that? What about the Palestine issue? When we raised the situation in the region, he said: No, they will not take pressure on the Palestinian issue. I asked him: Where do you stand? I put the same question to Gorbachev when I travelled to Moscow in September. Gorbachev said: The Americans are opposed to linkage between Kuwait and the Palestinian issue. I then asked: You have stood by us for decades, and you are supposed to take our side. You are within your rights to disagree with us on the question of Kuwait. However, you are supposed to advocate our argument establishing a link between the issues in the region, and to acknowledge that the time is right for all Middle East problems to be addressed.

You are entitled to your own opinion on the question of Kuwait, and we will not be upset if you disagree with us; but you are expected to help us work out regional disputes. These were the exact words his excellency the president said to Primakov: When we get a solution to all issues, we will be prepared to give ground on some of them. The president also said: You are an expert on the region, and you know us.

Note: Primakov had known both his excellency the president and myself since 1961; we had dinner and lunch together, and he visited Iraq many times, so we knew each other quite well.

Third Installment

JN2302084892 Amman AL-DUSTUR in Arabic 23 Feb 92 p 16

[Third and final installment of a "dialogue" with Deputy Prime Minister Tariq 'Aziz conducted by Khayri Mansur and Nahid Hattar in Baghdad; date not given]

[Text] [AL-DUSTUR] Yet, he [Primakov] employed this acquaintance to draw negative conclusions?

['Aziz] Primakov played the role of an agent. Did this man change, or was he a secret agent from the beginning? I do not want to judge. His role was very bad.

The president told him: Iraq has no problem with or without Kuwait. Iraq's problem is the same as the rest of the Arabs; namely, Israel and the Palestine question. I had told Gorbachev, the envoys, and others that even the issue of geography is one closely related to Iraq's geography. We have strong relations with Jordan, and we share common interests. Al-'Aqabah is 1,300-1,500 km from our capital. Even the border dispute between Iraq and Kuwait could have been tackled within the framework of relations based on mutual interest and economic integration. Even if there were regional problems, the nature of the relationship would have resolved them. However, when you are besieged, an inch of land becomes very important to you. When Syria does not open its borders, and Saudi Arabia closes its borders, an inch of land becomes important, in order to find outlets to live.

I told Primakov: Kuwait is not a problem. It was the result of a conspiracy that targeted Iraq. Solve the main problem for us. Had there been no threat, what would we want with advanced weapons which cost us a lot of money.

Take Tunisia and Jordan. The population of Tunisia is greater than that of Jordan. Yet Tunisia does not spend as much on its army as Jordan does. Why? Jordan is forced to do so. It has a 450 km-long border with Israel. Therefore, it must have tanks, warplanes, and artillery to prepare itself for possible invasion by the enemy. Libya is to the east of Tunisia, Algeria is to its west, the desert is to its south, and the Mediterranean Sea is to its north. There is no likelihood of war between France and Tunisia, so it need not arm and defend itself. Jordan, however, is forced to arm itself. Based on this standard, we are compelled to arm ourselves. Therefore, we must tackle this issue in a profound and comprehensive way.

He replied, however, that the Americans do not accept this. America's policy is known, and we are in confrontation with it. He did not present any solutions. When he came to Iraq during the war, he said: We ask you to be flexible, and accept Resolution 660. His excellency the president told him: What about the Palestine question? Primakov said: No, the Palestine question will not be discussed. We are concerned about Iraq, its strength, and this regime. Listen to this lying. The president told him: We will study this, and Tariq will come to you to follow up on this. He told him "to follow up," but he did not say to convey the reply. There are issues related to the Palestine question, and others related to us. Regarding the sanctions issue, Tariq will come to discuss it with you.

I actually went on my first visit to explore, and not to decide on matters. However, he said: Tariq 'Aziz came to us unauthorized. There is no foreign minister authorized or unauthorized. It is not the first time in history that a foreign minister goes on a mission while he is unauthorized. They played on this issue and described me as a messenger [preceding word in English]. Actually, I was. He also came as a messenger. We met to analyze positions: What was possible and what was not possible. The picture became clear to me. There were clear issues which I explained. He asked me: Do you agree on withdrawal; on accepting Resolution 660; and on the other details, such as the timing of the withdrawal and how long it would take....etc.? I was flexible. I am a member of the leadership, and therefore I knew how long the withdrawal would take; but as I said, I was flexible—a week more or a week less—and on other issues which I decided, so that their discussion would not take a long time due to communication. I told them: We agree on Resolution 660. They said: Is this a frank approval? I answered: Yes, frankly, we agree on withdrawal. They asked: How much time do you need to withdraw? I said: Six weeks. They said: No, only four days. I said: This is impossible, because we have an entire army and hundreds of thousands of pieces of equipment on the front. How can I withdraw all this in four days? Then they said: Tomorrow we will reach an agreement with them. They asked about the prisoners issue. I said: We will return them, but we do not have telephones and electricity, and gas is scarce; therefore, I cannot tell you how many prisoners we have, determine their whereabouts, or when we can assemble them. I am saying that we are ready to return them as soon as possible. I asked about sanctions. They said: The sanctions will be lifted as soon as you announce your agreement on Resolution 660.

The next day, Bessmertnykh, Primakov, and I met. We agreed to withdraw within three weeks. I was pressured on the prisoners issue. We agreed on four days. I told them: I am ready to return them in one day, but I cannot promise that I can assemble them in two days when this actually takes three days; therefore, I will be inaccurate and appear as if I did not implement the agreement.

Primakov said: Say four days, and if they turn out to be five, we will be held responsible. I told him: I have no desire to prolong the time period. Afterward, Bessmertnykh called me, saying: Gorbachev is holding contacts. He wants you to declare your support for the points which he announced. I asked him: Now? He said: No. Tomorrow morning, we will meet at the Foreign Ministry and discuss this issue. I went there at around 1030. Primakov, who was there, said that everything was now over. Gorbachev had announced his plan, he noted. He added: Right now, we are contacting other countries and the Security Council to hold a council meeting, in order to turn this plan into a resolution. However, you should hold a news conference. And indeed, they prepared the conference hall for this purpose. I told reporters that I had a very brief statement [preceding word in English] to make. I spoke in Arabic and English, saying: The seven-point plan announced by President Gorbachev yesterday is fully endorsed by the Iraqi Government. I am here to announce the Iraqi Government's unqualified and clear approval of this plan. I telephoned Gorbachev through a translator. Gorbachev told me: I understand you held a news conference. This is good. I am holding contacts with Bush, Mitterrand, and Major. He listed the people whom he had contacted, including President Hafiz al-Asad, Rafsanjani, and President Husni Mubarak.

I told him: I am leaving. Do you have any recommendations? He answered: No. Goodbye.

I arrived in Amman and met with His Majesty King Husayn. It was Ramadan. I spoke to him about everything. I told him that a cease-fire resolution was in the offing. He was deeply relieved by this. We slept that night. By the time we woke up at 0400, the ground offensive had started.

[AL-DUSTUR] Was that part of the game?

['Aziz] Perhaps it was part of the game. The Soviet Union—the Soviet leadership—was part of a conspiracy. I went to Moscow before Resolution 678 was issued in November, which gave us 45 days to withdraw. I had visited Moscow in September. Later, Primakov came to Baghdad twice, in October and in November. Gorbachev sent a letter to the president, asking him to send me to Moscow. They agreed that I would go on Sunday evening, and begin talks with Gorbachev and Shevardnadze on Monday. I went, and the topic of discussion was the resolution they were debating at the Security Council. Of course, I asked them not to endorse this resolution. It is illogical to approve a Security Council resolution that justifies U.S. military aggression on Iraq. I met with them, and we had lunch together. I left Moscow Monday evening. On Tuesday, Sa'ud al-Faysal [Saudi foreign minister] arrived. Before Moscow, I had visited an informed and friendly Arab country. The president of this country told me: The Gulf states have agreed to give the Soviet Union $7 billion in exchange for its approval of the U.S. resolution. Sa'ud al-Faysal came on Tuesday, and paid $4 billion. On Wednesday, Shevardnadze left for New York and voted "yes"; they "sold us." The Soviet Union, which claimed to be a superpower, sold us. The Soviet Union had a position

and a viewpoint, yet it sold its vote on Resolution 678 for $4 billion, paid by Sa'ud al-Faysal a day after my departure.

[AL-DUSTUR] Why do you not help, on an Arab level...[changes thought] Egypt's experiment after 1956 was a big one. Why do you not have a "Voice of the Arabs" in Baghdad? Why do you not have a voice heard within a media plan? The crisis is serious in all countries of the Arab homeland; the Arab people consider your experiment a symbol; and the hostile international situation is eroding. Is an attack on the political media front not the best means of defense?

['Aziz] Our mistake is clear. However, our steps are governed by our capabilities. In the 1967 aggression, Egypt lost Sinai and the Suez Canal. It was not destroyed, however, and did not lose its other resources. It received Arab compensation for its losses in the Suez Canal. Iraq has no hard currency. Also, we do not have activities that require financing. Our activities depend on individual efforts.

[AL-DUSTUR] Is Iraq's policy still to entrench its relations with the Arab masses?

['Aziz] Yes. This is our destiny. It is the destiny of Iraq and the Arab nation to continue to uphold their slogans and objectives.

[AL-DUSTUR] Can we reassure ourselves about Iraq's military capabilities, and about our Iraqi Army's capabilities and status?

['Aziz] I prefer not to talk about this issue.

[AL-DUSTUR] There is no political regime that can stand fast by force alone. So how did you stand fast in the face of the aggression, and with two large-scale rebellions? Is there a social base on which the political regime in Iraq relies?

['Aziz] An American journalist conducted an interview with me, which was published in the NEW YORKER magazine last May. He asked a similar question, tendentiously, of course, not the way you put your question. He said: You are a regime which is isolated from the people. They accuse you of dictatorship and sectarianism. He mentioned all the known stories. I told him: In March, we were the weakest regime in the world. Even the weak African states have telephones. When the southern Iraq incidents erupted, we were a state without telephones or electricity, and gas was scarce. Our Army was scattered from the south to the center. How then could we destroy what you call a "popular revolution against the regime?" This proves, as I said, the existence of a popular base on which the regime relies and popular support for it. This also proves that the issue of rebellion was a technical one. How can you deal with it technically so as to contain and repress it? If the people were against us, how could we stand fast while we were the weakest government? If the regime in Iraq was as they describe it, hated and rejected by the people, how could we impose order by force, which we did not have, between the beginning and end of March? Our Army was scattered, our bridges were destroyed, and our control over our forces was only moral. We did not pay their salaries at the time. They did not even receive their rations. They obeyed us because they considered us their leaders. Those who fought with us fought because they were convinced that the rebellion was a rejected criminal act which must be ended.

[AL-DUSTUR] Can we say that the Iraqi regime is based on social options that enjoy popular support?

['Aziz] The people constitute our primary base. This is because the people fought the Iraq-Iran war. Normally, soldiers do the fighting. Junior officers also fight. Nevertheless senior officers, and even his excellency the president, were at the front during the war with Iran, the Kuwait incidents, and the riots that occurred at the end of the war.

[AL-DUSTUR] Has this harsh experience produced a change, a restructuring of middle leadership positions?

['Aziz] With regard to the Army, yes. Our system is based on constant review. We used to review and analyze each battle with Iran and to identify efficient and courageous personnel. This is the pattern of constant review in Iraq.

[AL-DUSTUR] The big question raised by the average Arab concerns the relationship between the results of the war and the efforts to achieve a Middle East settlement. To be honest, there is a general feeling of frustration by the average Arab regarding this. To what extent were the settlement endeavors a political exploitation of the military results of the war?

['Aziz] I do not want to address the settlement efforts in a quick and superficial comment. This issue must be dealt with properly. We have to be fair in this regard. I cannot put the positions of Jordan, Syria, Egypt, and the PLO in a single basket. They do not belong there. There are fine distinctions among the positions of these parties. I will answer this question in another session, because this interview will not be the last.

[AL-DUSTUR] Thank you. Sorry for burdening you with these questions. From the outset, we did not want our dialogue to be traditional. This is because there are some serious and intense political questions posed by the average Arab. There is also an insatiable curiosity about the details of what transpired during the last days of this ferocious war.

Mr. Tariq 'Aziz bade us farewell. Three destroyed trees on the left of the road served as a reminder of the aggression. Baghdad's skies were preparing themselves for the February rains. The eternal Tigris was flowing confidently toward the Shatt al-'Arab.

Minutes after this interview was concluded, we found ourselves in the heart of Baghdad, overwhelmed by the warmth of millions of Iraqi brothers.

Shamir on U.S. Loan Guarantees Position

TA2702165192 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1535 GMT 27 Feb 92

["Impromptu" interview with Prime Minister Yitzhaq Shamir by political correspondent Arye Golan and party affairs correspondent Shlomo Raz at the Israel Convention Center at the Tel Aviv Fairgrounds on 27 February—live]

[Excerpt] [passage omitted] [Golan] Mr. Prime Minister, let us move on to another issue. Let us discuss the issue of the loan guarantees that we are not receiving from the United States. From time to time we hear statements by Secretary of State Baker, who seems increasingly determined that it is either settlements or guarantees. The question is whether you are under the impression—and there have also been reports to this effect in the United States—that Washington would like to see Yitzhaq Rabin heading the next government after the elections?

[Shamir] Look, there are various rumors. There is speculation. Mountains of theories are built. The problem of settlements and guarantees is part of the relationship between Israel and the United States. It is part of the greater picture of U.S. involvement in what is happening in the Middle East. To my regret, on this issue the United States has adopted a position in support of one of the parties to the conflict.

[Raz] The Arab side?

[Shamir] Of course.

[Golan] How do you resolve this dilemma? You need money to help the immigrants....

[Shamir, interrupting] No, now look, the Arabs have received massive support and aid. Look how much Egypt has gotten over the last few years from the United States....

[Golan, interrupting] They also had a huge debt written off.

[Shamir] Yes, a debt of $7 billion was written off during this difficult period of painful budgetary constraints. Other elements in the Middle East as well. This is part of the issue, part of the differences of opinion between us and the United States. The problem is that there has never been such an outright and blatant exploitation of humanitarian aid to force Israel to adopt a certain path.

[Raz] Why is this happening just now, sir?

[Shamir] The United States has never done this before, but it can happen once. Everything happens once. It will be very bad if this becomes a precedent.

[Raz] Sir, would you join those, including several senior cabinet ministers, who have said that it would be better to forgo the guarantees?

[Shamir] I do not despair. We need the guarantees. Anyone preventing us from getting the guarantees will be committing a grave injustice against a great humanitarian endeavor. I am in no hurry to give up on the guarantees.

[Golan] Mr. Prime Minister, we have heard reports that the talks in Washington, at least those between the Israeli delegation and the Palestinians, are not proceeding well.

[Shamir] I think that the talks are proceeding as well as could be expected. We all know that these are very unique, complex, and difficult negotiations. The process will take a lot of time. If one takes all this into account, then I think that the negotiations are going exceptionally well.

[Golan] Are you encouraged by what is happening there?

[Shamir] It is not a matter of being encouraged. I think that we are conducting the negotiations in a very successful manner. We are proving to whoever wants to see the truth that we want and desire peace. We are making a tremendous effort to keep this process going and to prevent it from being disrupted. I believe that the members of our teams are doing an exceptional job. They exhibit a profound knowledge of the facts, determination, and a sincere desire to achieve the goal of peace despite all difficulties. I am quite optimistic, especially because of what is perceived from afar as difficulties.

[Golan] Tonight as well, Mr. Shamir, we are dealing with the upcoming Knesset elections. I believe that until now, Construction and Housing Minister Ari'el Sharon has been the one to fire the heaviest artillery at Labor by claiming that Rabin was to blame for the katyushas falling on the Galilee.

[Shamir] Look, I do not want to get into election debates at this moment. The time for that will come. Meanwhile, let everyone take care of his own backyard.

[Golan] What political line will you take?

[Shamir, laughing] We shall see. It is still too early to discuss that.

[Golan] Thank you, Prime Minister Shamir.

Levi: Negotiations for Loans 'Must Continue'

TA2702182392 Tel Aviv IDF Radio in Hebrew 1727 GMT 27 Feb 92

[Interview with Foreign Minister David Levi by Rafi Reshef at the Israel Convention Center at the Tel Aviv fairgrounds—live]

[Excerpt] [Reshef] Good evening, Foreign Minister Levi.

[Levi] Good evening.

[Reshef] Let us start with the loan guarantees. Do you believe that some solution to the issue will be found by the end of the month?

[Levi] I very much hope so. One must not believe that there is some kind of rift. Nor should one accept the bizarre suggestions that Israel give up on the guarantees. The issue has a significance beyond the guarantees themselves, because when countries clash with each other they can become accustomed to such a situation, which is very dangerous as far as we are concerned. Therefore, the dialogue must continue and we must achieve what I would call some sort of understanding, which will not force Israel to adopt a policy which runs counter to its positions. This is something that from the governmental aspect could later have no limit. On the other hand, one cannot ignore the U.S. Administration's guiding principles regarding the investment of the funds it is guaranteeing. We must find a mutually acceptable path between these two positions, and I believe it can be done.

[Reshef] Could you perhaps translate this problem into some kind of formula that would be acceptable to both sides?

[Levi] I hope that such a formula can be found. I believe that if both sides so desire it will be found, and I consider the steps taken by both the Congress and the administration, which were designed to permit the endorsement of the guarantees—leaving the issue of understandings between the administration and the Israeli Government to be dealt with later—a step forward that proves that neither the administration nor Congress seeks to close the door on the issue.

[Reshef] In other words, you are actually saying that a formula could be reached in which the United States will give us the guarantees and then seek the compromise formula?

[Levi] No. In the current state of affairs they cannot issue the guarantees and then look for the formula. Rather, it can be done simultaneously. The moment the guarantees are endorsed in principle—something Israel has expected—while stipulating that the conditions will be agreed upon between the administration and the Israeli Government, then this will constitute a step forward.

[Reshef] Do you believe the reports that the U.S. Administration, or rather George Bush and James Baker, want Yitzhaq Rabin to head the Israeli Government?

[Levi] I do not subscribe to these reports because the administration is aware that this would act as a boomerang. If this were the case they would not have agreed upon things with us. In my opinion, these agreements are proof that the United States understands that the Likud can promote peace better than Labor. As for Labor, when you hear Rabin's latest statements one can say that if this is their attitude, then the Arabs will accept neither Labor's nor Likud's positions. Therefore, we must uphold those principles that have been agreed upon with the United States and are now shared by all. We must move forward. Sometimes there are feelings of anger and bitterness; however, we must not let this bitterness drive us to conclusions that in my opinion have no positive results even as far as the Americans are concerned. Any intervention in domestic affairs is a very serious affair, and the Americans are very aware of this. [passage omitted]

Defense Minister on Lebanon, al-Musawi Killing

TA2802120092 Tel Aviv YEDI'OT AHARONOT (LESHABAT supplement) in Hebrew 28 Feb 92 pp 7, 20

[Interview with Defense Minister Moshe Arens by Ron Ben-Yishay; place and date not specified]

[Excerpt] [passage omitted] [Ben-Yishay] One possible argument is that the real reason katyushas are no longer being launched at Israel is not so much the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] operation as the U.S. pressure on Syria and, indirectly, on Iran.

[Arens] Everything is interrelated. We asked the Americans to appeal to Damascus and Beirut. They did so, and the reply they received was affirmative, but only because it was clear to everyone, including the Americans, what would be the outcome if the katyushas continued flying. I think the fact that there are no more katyushas is a considerable achievement for Israel's defense policy.

[Ben-Yishay] In retrospect, we realize that the elimination of al-Musawi cost us the lives of a child and two soldiers, in addition to several wounded and the disruption of normal life in northern Israel. Was it worth it?

[Arens] I think the equation is inappropriate. You ought to include the hundreds of people, Israelis and Americans, who were killed as a result of the activities of Hizballah and of al-Musawi himself. You should also include people who were liable to become the victims of al-Musawi's ambitions.

[Ben-Yishay] Is his heir, Shaykh Nasrallah, any better?

[Arens] We, more than any other nation, have learned that it takes every ounce of strength to combat terrorism. They know no mercy or kindness. They will strike at us anywhere they can, in any way they can. We can presume that if there is one less terrorist, there will be less terror. They will be more apprehensive and fearful; they will seek cover. This will disrupt their activities and their chain of command.

There is no other way to combat terrorism. You need no reasons, arguments, or detailed justifications to act against it. All you have to do is simply strike out at it. We realized this a long time ago, and I am surprised to see that a few Israelis seem to have forgotten this lesson.

[Ben-Yishay] But before the elimination of al-Musawi, Hizballah operated only in the security zone, rather than directly against Israel.

[Arens] This is simply untrue. Hizballah strives to annihilate the State of Israel, not just to get the IDF out of the security zone. If your question implies that Hizballah can be appeased and persuaded to fight us halfheartedly and in certain areas only, this is simply a very serious mistake. If we take such an approach to this organization, I believe it will go far toward achieving its goals.

[Ben-Yishay] Minister Sharon claims the security zone is too narrow.

[Arens] It is true that were the security zone's depth equal to the range of a katyusha, it would provide the population of northern Israel with almost hermetic protection and absolute security. In this sense, the security zone in its present size is too narrow. On the other hand, if the security zone were as deep as the range of a katyusha, its area would be considerably larger than it is today, which would mean a hostile local population of considerable proportions. This factor would make control of the area more difficult. We need a solution that can properly balance these two factors.

Had I been the one to decide on the security zone borders, I would have definitely made a slightly different choice. By the way, the security zone proposed by Mr. Rabin at the time did not include control of Jazzin. I think it is a good thing that the control of the Jazzin area remained in the hands of General Lahd and his men. Had it been otherwise, our situation in recent years would have been much more difficult.

[Ben-Yishay] Why?

[Arens] Because the Jazzin district provides additional depth in a certain security zone sector, and this is significant.

[Ben-Yishay] Perhaps the security zone should be expanded in the narrow spot opposite the villages of Yatar and Kafra, where it is less than 4 km in width?

[Arens] I do not think the situation should be altered at the moment. We have managed to make the rules of the game clear, even with the security zone being what it is.

[Ben-Yishay] What is the status of the efforts to secure the release of Ron Arad, the return of the remains of Alsheikh and Fink, and the attempts to find out the fate of the three MIA's from al-Sultan Ya'qub?

[Arens] Unfortunately, we have as yet no news in this field.

[Ben-Yishay] Do we know where Ron Arad is being held and by whom?

[Arens] There are conjectures, but we do not know. We hope and act on the assumption that he is alive.

[Ben-Yishay] Many U.S. media representatives regard the fact that Israel has not received the loan guarantees as an American attempt to help Rabin and Labor win the next elections. Do you, as one who is well acquainted with the U.S. arena, share this opinion?

[Arens] I find it hard to believe that the U.S. Administration is deliberately planning to intervene in the Israeli election campaign. This is contrary to a longstanding tradition. What I find most alarming, however, is this situation in which the Americans are telling us: You need this humanitarian aid; this aid should really be granted, and we are capable of providing it, but we will not do so unless this or that condition is met. We are talking about a humanitarian issue here, and political conditions in such a case are inconsistent with the American character.

[Ben-Yishay] Is the State of Israel now better prepared to protect its civilian population and to defend itself against nonconventional weapons than it was before—six months ago, for instance?

[Arens] It is hard to answer this question in any substantial way, but it can be stated in general terms that we are on the right track.

The Arrow is not operational as yet of course, but the development efforts are continuing. There have been problems with the tests, some of which resulted from the fact that we are a very small country forced to conduct tests in small spaces and under much more difficult conditions than those in the United States or the former USSR, for instance. These countries have all the necessary space for testing such missiles.

As for snags in the missile itself, we think engineers working on it have located the source of the problem, and we believe we know how to rectify it. We know that there is no basic problem in the system itself that would make us doubt its potential. One must remember: This is a very ambitious system, offering a missile that can reach enormous acceleration and, therefore, great pressure and high temperature—much more than any other advanced missile.

Likud Central Committee Term Extended

TA2702152392 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1500 GMT 27 Feb 92

[Text] The Tel Aviv District Court has extended the present Likud Central Committee's term until mid-April. A Likud representative claimed in court that if the party is left without its supreme institution on the eve of elections, its performance and ability to compete in the elections will be impaired.

Our correspondent Ron Nesi'el reports that in mid-April, the court will rule on the Likud's request to extend the present central committee's term by one year.

Levi 18th in Likud Knesset Election List

TA2802060492 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0500 GMT 28 Feb 92

[Text] The Likud Central Committee last night elected its 50 representatives to the Knesset. Minister Moshe Qatzav was elected to first place, Deputy Minister Binyamin Netanyahu came in second, and Knesset Member [MK] Beni Begin was third. Minister Ari'el Sharon came in fourth. Minister David Levi was pushed to 18th place, and only nine members of his camp were elected to the Knesset list. The Shamir-Arens camp won a resounding majority, with some 35 members of those elected. Nine representatives of the former Liberal Party were elected. The Likud list contains 18 new faces, including three women. Of the present MK's only one, Hayim Corfu, was not elected to the list.

On Sunday and Monday the Likud Central Committee will elect the four groups of seven, ranking the candidates in the Likud list to the next Knesset.

[Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el Hebrew at 0505 GMT on 28 February carries a recorded passage in which Minister Levi said immediately after his placing became known: "I am used to those sort of tricks; they were used some four years ago. When I competed personally, I came second with a large percentage, 32 percent, but now, when there is a united conspiracy against me, this is the outcome. We will see what happens when the groups of seven are elected."

NRP Adopts Proposal on Candidate Ranking

TA2702202092 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 2000 GMT 27 Feb 92

[Text] The NRP [National Religious Party] Central Committee has adopted Education Minister Zvulun Hammer's proposal regarding the ranking of the party's candidates in its Knesset list. According to the decision, the party will first elect its number 1 candidate and choose the other candidates afterwards.

Our party affairs correspondent Shlomo Raz reports that the proposal was supported by 55 percent of Central Committee members. A proposal by Religious Affairs Minister Avner Sciaki was voted down. The NRP's Central Committee will convene in 10 days to elect its candidates.

February Immigration 'Lowest' Since December 1989

TA2702185792 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in English 1800 GMT 27 Feb 92

[Text] In February, about 5,000 immigrants came to Israel. That is about half the number that came to Israel last February. It is also the lowest figure for any month since the current wave of immigration began in December of 1989. Among those who arrived this month were 400 from Ethiopia.

Abu-Jabir: Resolution 'Needs No Reinterpretation'

JN2702165192 Amman Radio Jordan Network in Arabic 1600 GMT 27 Feb 92

[Text] Commenting on a news report disseminated by newspapers and news agencies, regarding the formation of a committee to interpret UN Resolution 242, Dr. Kamil Abu-Jabir, foreign minister, told the JORDANIAN NEWS AGENCY that Jordan's position vis-a-vis this resolution is clear and well known. He adds that the Jordanian position does not deviate from the framework of the international interpretation of this resolution, based on the exchange of land for peace; that is, complete Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories—including holy Jerusalem—as a basis for a comprehensive, peaceful settlement, which Jordan has been calling for since 1967, and which Jordan is trying to achieve today. Abu-Jabir said: On this basis, this resolution—in Jordan's opinion—needs no reinterpretation.

Tunisian Foreign Minister Departs 27 Feb

JN2702125492 Amman Radio Jordan in English 1200 GMT 27 Feb 92

[Text] The Tunisian foreign minister, Habib Ben Yahya, left Amman today at the end of a three-day visit to Jordan.

During the visit, the Tunisian minister conveyed a letter to His Majesty King Husayn from the Tunisian president, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, dealing with relations between the two countries, and with supporting the Palestinian people, with a view to enabling them to achieve comprehensive and just solution to the Palestinian issue.

The Tunisian minister also held talks with the Jordanian officials on the latest developments in the region and the Middle East peace process. The talks also dealt with ways of strengthening relations between the two countries.

Lebanese Soldier Killed by IDF Near Hasbayya

TA2802082992 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0700 GMT 28 Feb 92

[Text] A Lebanese Army soldier was shot dead in the security zone by the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] last night. Our correspondent Hayim Hecht reports that an IDF patrol on routine duty in the area of the township of Hasbayya opened fire at suspicious movement, and that in searches conducted this morning the body of the soldier was found.

Al-Hirawi Condition 'Good' After 'Simple' Surgery

NC2802093992 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 0900 GMT 28 Feb 92

[Text] The administration of the St. Charles Hospital in al-Hazimiyah has issued the following statement: His excellency, President Ilyas al-Hirawi, underwent a simple surgical operation at St. Charles Hospital this morning. The president's condition is good.

The statement was signed by Professor Antoine Ghusayn, Professor Antoine Nasrallah, and Professor Shahin Abu-Sulayman.

Karami Briefs UN Envoy on Country's 'Needs'

NC2802102292 (Clandestine) Radio Free Lebanon in Arabic 0945 GMT 28 Feb 92

[Text] Prime Minister 'Umar Karami met with the general coordinator of UN affairs in Lebanon this morning, reviewing together United Nations proposals and Lebanon's needs.

UN's Goulding To Prepare Report for Ghali

NC2802105292 (Clandestine) Radio Free Lebanon in Arabic 0945 GMT 28 Feb 92

[Text] Timor Goksel, spokesman for the UN Interim Force in Lebanon [UNIFIL], announced that UN Assistant Secretary General Marrack Goulding visited the south to see what was going on, and to prepare a report for UN Secretary General Butrus Ghali.

Nasrallah on Firing of Rockets, al-Ta'if Accord

NC2702134092 (Clandestine) Voice of the Mountain in Arabic to Lebanon 1230 GMT 27 Feb 92

[Text] Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah, Hizballah secretary general, has stated that any internal reconciliation will be fragile while the issue of enmity for Israel remains undecided.

Sayyid Nasrallah asked: Are we or are we not interested in defending Lebanon against Israel? He added that we do not install rocket launchers and fire on the occupied areas. Nasrallah said: Al-Ta'if has turned into a constitution, and we oppose it.

Fadlallah Sees U.S. Campaign Against Kidnappers

NC2502150792 Paris AFP in English 1439 GMT 25 Feb 92

[Text] Beirut, Feb 25 (AFP)—The recent assassination of a Shiite Muslim leader was the first phase of a U.S. campaign to hunt down those it deems responsible for kidnapping Westerners in Lebanon, a key Muslim figure charged Tuesday.

Shaykh Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah, spiritual guide of Lebanese Shiites, in an interview with AL-SAFIR daily also condemned the kidnappings more than two years ago of two German relief workers, the only remaining Western hostages.

"After the release of the hostages, the Americans developed a specific plan to avenge those they consider responsible for the abductions..., to weaken the Islamic (militants) and liquidate their leaders," Fadlallah said.

"Israel, I imagine, plays a primordial role in the plan of the United States, which does not want to appear directly implicated in the assassinations," he said.

Shaykh 'Abbas al-Musawi, leader of the pro-Iranian movement Hizballah was killed in an Israeli helicopter raid near the southern port city of Sidon on February 16.

The killing "constitutes a goal of the West which targets Hizballah, accused by (the West's) intelligence services of being behind hostage-taking and numerous operations described as terrorist," Fadlallah charged.

Referring to the two German hostages, whose kidnappers are demanding the release of two Lebanese brothers from a German prison, Fadlallah said this "case is of a family, not a political nature."

Al-Shar' Receives UK Foreign Office Official

JN2702122592 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1115 GMT 27 Feb 92

[Text] Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shar' received David Gilmore, secretary general of the British Foreign Office, this morning. Yusuf Shakkur, assistant to the foreign minister, and Andrew Fleming Green, British ambassador to Damascus, attended.

The situation in the region and developments of the peace process were reviewed during the meeting. Talks also focused on Israeli attacks on southern Lebanon, which were aimed at halting the peace process; and on the intransigent and provocative Israeli stance at the bilateral peace talks in Washington—a stance aimed at sabotaging the peace efforts.

Both sides held similar views on the importance of the U.S. Administration's position on the loan guarantees, considering it a constructive position that helps continue the peace process. Talks also dealt with bilateral relations and means of developing them in all areas.

Received by Information Minister

JN2702163392 Damascus SANA in Arabic 1600 GMT 27 Feb 92

[Text] Damascus, 27 Feb (SANA)—At noon today, Information Minister Muhammad Salman received David Gilmore, secretary general of the British Foreign Office. The meeting was attended by British Ambassador to Damascus Andrew Green.

Discussions at the meeting dealt with bilateral relations, and the role that the EC can play in advancing the peace process and pressuring Israel to accept the resolutions of international legitimacy, to realize a just and comprehensive peace in the region, in accordance with UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.

U.S. Credibility Seen Facing 'Decisive Test'

JN2702114792 Damascus SANA in Arabic 0910 GMT 27 Feb 92

[Text] Damascus, 27 Feb (SANA)—AL-BA'TH today publishes an editorial by Dr. Turki al-Saqr, chief editor, entitled: "The Reality of the Seed of the U.S.-Israeli Disagreement." In this editorial, AL- BA'TH asks: What is the reality of the seed of the disagreement? What did President Bush demand from Israel that he is being threatened by Zionist mass media with a defeat in the forthcoming elections? What did Baker demand from Israel that he is the target of all these attacks?

The paper says: Scrutinizing the matter, one finds that President Bush and Secretary Baker asked Israel for nothing but their attendance at a peace process based on international legitimacy; UN Resolutions 242 and 338; the exchange of land for peace; and a pledge by the Shamir government to halt the building of new settlements in the occupied territories, so that the U.S. Administration will grant Israel the $10 billion in loan guarantees to accommodate the new settlers—who, in any case, constitute a time bomb in this region.

The paper explains that Bush and Baker are demanding practically nothing from Israel. Since 1967, successive U.S. administrations have considered the building of settlements in the territories occupied after 1967 an illegitimate action and an obstacle to peace. The current U.S. Administration, which proposed the peace initiative, considers continued settlement building a threat to this initiative and to the peace process led by President Bush.

The paper explains that what Bush and Baker demanded has not in any way harmed peace, which the Israeli Government itself claims before the world that it desires.

The paper adds: The problem is not in what Bush or Baker are demanding, but in the Israeli Government's ambitions. The Tel Aviv rulers reject international legitimacy and reject any talk about enforcing it. They also reject peace or any peace process that would lead to curbing their expansionist ambitions. Since the Zionist lobby is active during this period of elections, the Tel Aviv rulers want to impose their will on the United States, and force it to support Israeli policies aimed at aborting the peace process.

Concluding its editorial, AL-BA'TH says that the Arabs want peace, international legitimacy, the implementation of UN resolutions, and the exchange of land for peace. The more the United States adheres to international legitimacy, the smaller the distance between the United States and the Arabs and the world. A great distance used to exist, when the United States stood alone to defend Israel's aggression. There is no other way for the United States to prove its credibility to the world. This credibility is facing a final, decisive test.

Cabinet, Internal Policy Changes Predicted

PM2602121392 London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic 25 Feb 92 p 1

['Uqbah 'Ali al-Salih report: "Syrian Cabinet Reshuffle Expected Next Month: New Formula for Relations Between Party and Government Institutions"]

[Text] Paris—Well-informed Syrian sources have revealed that Muhammad al-Zu'bi's cabinet will announce its resignation 13 March, which coincides with the end of President Hafiz al-Asad's third term and the start of his fourth term. The sources say that the new cabinet will be announced 14 March, and that President al-Asad will make an "extremely important" speech the same day which, they say, "will be a turning point in Syria's internal policy." There were rumors of Syrian cabinet changes around the end of last year, when the referendum was held on the renewal of President al-Asad's mandate for another seven years. The Syrian electoral system, however, is based on the U.S. system,

whereby a certain period of time has to elapse between the elections and the start of the new term.

According to sources close to the Presidential Palace in Damascus, the new government will have unprecedented powers in economic and internal affairs, and especially in its relations with the ruling Ba'th Party. The majority of ministers in the new cabinet, the sources say, will be from outside the party. The Ba'thist ministers will be in a minority.

The same sources say that, although President al-Asad has not yet named the future prime minister, the name most mentioned is that of General Hikmat al-Shihabi, the chief of staff, seen by observers as one of the strong political figures who, according to one observer, was not "utlized in government before." Al-Shihabi is known for his complete loyalty to President al-Asad, and also for his strong personality, which will enable him to face the pressures of certain trends opposed to the policy of economic liberalization. Furthermore, al-Shihabi has close links with officials in many Arab states, particularly Egypt and the Gulf states. That should facilitate the strengthening of Syrian ties with these states, and boost the "Damascus Declaration" signed after the Gulf war. Internally, al-Shihabi seems to be the new "open door policy" man, who would prepare the Syrian political scene for a new phase based on separation of powers, giving the people's assembly (parliament) a bigger role to play, curtailing the Ba'th Party leadership's direct interference in government policy, and confining that leadership's role to the Ba'thist deputies in the people's assembly.

The sources say that in his speech, President al-Asad will announce a large number of changes in domestic policy at all levels. Many detainees and prisoners held without trial for years are expected to be released. The sources do not rule out the release of several thousand detainees, the vast majority of whom have been held since 1978. Some of those detained since 1970, including former Syrian President Nur-al-Din al-Atasi and his group, are also expected to be released. The sources maintain that the decision is justified, because internal political stability is such that there is no longer any need to keep these people in detention. It is also not unlikely that the National Progressive Front, which consists of the alliance of parties in power, will be expanded to include a liberal party and an Islamic party, and the publication of an independent newspaper may be allowed.

The process of freeing the economy is expected to continue along with this internal political relaxation. Some prominent Syrian businessmen expect a stock exchange to open in Damascus before the summer, as well as new laws that would regulate the work of private banks, enhance the policy of freeing the movement of capital and exchange rates, and facilitate export and import procedures.

Afghanistan

Najibollah Opens State Council Session

LD2702153592 Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network in Dari 1630 GMT 26 Feb 92

[Speech by President Najibollah at the opening of the eighth regular session of the Meli Shura of the Republic of Afghanistan at Storay Palace on 26 February—recorded]

[Text] In the name of God, the merciful and the compassionate. Dear compatriots, deputies and senators of the Republic of Afghanistan: I am pleased to participate in the opening of the eighth regular session of the Meli Shura of the Republic of Afghanistan and to meet once again with the esteemed members of the country's parliament.

It has been three months since the previous session of the Meli Shura. During that time there have been new developments in the political and peaceful solution of the Afghan problem. Internal and external factors are gradually having a positive impact on the process of implementing a political solution and have brought about opportunities and possibilities for the convening of intra-Afghan talks.

The people and Government of Afghanistan marked the fifth anniversary of the declaration of national reconciliation during the period between the seventh and eighth regular sessions of the Meli Shura. As you know, the Republic of Afghanistan has continued its efforts toward better preparations for the political and peaceful solution of the Afghan problem, and new measures have been worked out in this respect. Fortunately, these measures and acts are in full harmony and complete compliance with international developments and the overall world situation.

The UN secretary general's five-point statement on Afghanistan, in terms of its fundamental aspects and elements for convening intra-Afghan talks, has become a viable basis for taking practical steps toward a political solution. As you know, His Excellency Benon Sevan, special envoy of the UN secretary general on Afghanistan, recently arrived in Kabul to continue the series of talks and visits, and met with me as well, in continuing his efforts to persuade the forces involved to convene intra-Afghan talks. During the meeting His Excellency Benon Sevan was briefed on developments in the Afghanistan situation, points of view, the possibility and potential for moving to a political and peaceful solution of the country's problem, the elements and principles that should be worked on before a meeting of the warring parties' representatives, and the circumstances surrounding the preparations for this gathering and its technical and political aspects. [passage indistinct]

Because views of the Republic of Afghanistan are based on realistic analysis and on consultation with various categories of people, they have brought about the hope that the Republic of Afghanistan's views can be taken into account in the peace process.

Fortunately, the UN secretary general's five-point plan has over time been approved and welcomed by internal and external sides involved and interested in the Afghan problem. You know about Pakistan's position on the statement. We hope Pakistan and the other external sides involved in the Afghan problem will take practical steps to implement the UN secretary general's statement. It complies with the interests of those countries and with the national interests of the countries in our region.

As far as we can see, Saudi Arabia has practically said that it will stop supplying weapons to the warring parties, which the Republic of Afghanistan welcomes. We hope that Saudi Arabia declares its position officially in this respect. As experience and existing realities demonstrate, weapons shipments should be halted in principle as a complementary step for the implementation of other parts of the UN secretary general's plan. It should be done in such a way that it can be coupled with a total cease-fire and the creation of a mechanism to control the transfer of weapons, because extremist forces have enough capabilities and reserves to continue to fight and sabotage the peace process for some time. If such a situation develops, it will interrupt the implementation of the secretary general's plan in one way or another.

Dear friends, the state of the Republic of Afghanistan, while putting forward proposals and taking practical measures to encourage a political and peaceful resolution of the Afghan problem, defends against and stands against warmongering forces. The country's Armed Forces, adhering to the political-military defensive doctrine, have made the requisite efforts to enhance their defensive potential and to safeguard the independence and national honor of the country. The Armed Forces of the Republic of Afghanistan are capable of defending against forces which impede the peace process and of fulfilling their patriotic and national appropriately.

It is the patriotic and national duty and obligation of every political force in the country to work for national unity. All forces should make efforts to defend and represent the higher interests of Afghanistan. The role of political forces, regardless of their numerical strength, is important and considerable in protecting national unity and in representing the high interests of the country and people in the form of national sovereignty. If those forces take the position of observers and consider mechanical relations and technical contacts sufficient [words indistinct]. While the peace process is taking shape in our country, there is a serious need for political and social organizations which support peace and defend the high interests of the country to mobilize more than ever and to enhance their relations from mechanical attitudes to really useful and effective cooperation.

[Words indistinct] political, tribal, national, and provincial differences and the creation of the kind of tension which has no fundamental value and is unrealistic at this

stage will create potential threats and actual dangers that, God forbid, will endanger national sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence, and all our national and historical values in the present situation.

Dear friends, there is much optimism about a political resolution of the Afghan problem among the people of Afghanistan and in the world. I was talking in technical terms to some friends a while ago. I said to them: We have flown our airplane in stormy weather and through rain and lightning and correctly guided it and flew it into Kabul's airspace. In Kabul we protected it against the occasional rockets that are fired. Now we are in a position to get our plane's wheels to touch ground smoothly, which is called landing [preceding word in English].

If at this stage, after suffering all the hardships and misery, we become careless, God forbid, then all the passengers will perish; all of our achievements will be annihilated. But if the landing is done correctly, the passengers will come to the conclusion that the crew was expert and made the landing in such a way that they did not even notice it.

Despite all optimism, all organs and state, political, and social organizations are duty-bound, at a time when our damaged ship is getting nearer to the shore, to lend a hand to one another and get it to shore through joint efforts. Otherwise, we might lose logical wisdom as a result of carelessness, selfishness, greed for power, or overoptimism and, God forbid, rock our ship near the shore.

Every stage has its own logic and gives birth to new characters, aspects, contradictions, and problems. We have passed through various stages and you know that we have been confronted by various economic, social, military, and political problems and have overcome them. We should also overcome the current problems with wisdom, candor, and steadfastness. This is a turning point, so no one should make calculations on a personal basis, as in: Where do I stand? I think the restoration of peace and the revival and progress of Afghanistan are of the utmost importance to every Afghan. But there are some individuals and forces who are wondering where we stand at this turning point. I think, at this stage, that it is our responsibility to held our sessions in a subtle, regular, and well-organized fashion. Otherwise the world will question the capabilities of us Afghans as well as our historical pride and qualitative capacities. Dear friends, the parliament of Afghanistan, which is one of the main things representing the national sovereignty of the country, has a very important role in the acceleration of the peace process.

A number of members of the Meli Shura of Afghanistan have succeeded in accomplishing beneficial work in their regions toward the cessation of war and the maintenance of peace. Some members of the Meli Shura visited their constituencies during the recess carrying notes on preprepared tasks, then carried out positive work with their constituents. The administrative board of both houses in separate and joint sessions worked on measured plans for the eighth session. Fortunately, the parliament of Afghanistan, as a major organ for the realization of the national reconciliation policy, has as a whole maintained cooperation and joint efforts with the country's executive organs. We hope that the Meli Shura of the Republic of Afghanistan will also carry out effective tasks toward maintaining working and beneficial relations with the relevant state organs.

Esteemed delegates and senators, recent developments in our region indicate that the Republic of Afghanistan is a link in strengthening and maintaining new economic relations in the region. As such it can play a considerable role in the consolidation of economic relations between the countries in the area.

The Republic of Afghanistan has officially welcomed the formation of regional economic organizations and long ago expressed its readiness to join them. Fortunately, Afghanistan's historical relations with neighboring countries are characterized by good relations and mutually beneficial cooperation. The Republic of Afghanistan has the desire and will to improve and strengthen relations with neighboring and regional countries within the framework of the new international atmosphere.

As you know, a high-ranking delegation from the Republic of Afghanistan headed by esteemed Vice President Abdorrahim Hatef recently visited the Republics of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan and met with authorities of these countries on the consolidation of political, economic, and cultural relations. The authorities of these republics, as a whole, expressed support for the political and peaceful solution of the questions in Afghanistan by Afghans themselves and expressed their readiness to expand cooperation in various fields.

Dear compatriots, Afghanistan has severely suffered as the result of a 13-year war. The traditional methods of economy, agriculture, transportation, and public services have suffered the heaviest losses. The people of Afghanistan expect the neighboring brother Islamic countries; the big world powers, such as the United States, Germany, France, and Japan; and other peace-loving countries of the world to render moral and humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan in these difficult conditions. Some of these countries condition their humanitarian assistance to the restoration of peace in Afghanistan and are waiting for the return of peace in the country before they will give help to the people of Afghanistan. The people of Afghanistan, in these difficult conditions, are presently in great need of humanitarian assistance. We believe that rendering international assistance to the people of Afghanistan is in itself a factor which maintains, speeds up, and guarantees the peace process, employment, and the return of refugees to the country.

Esteemed delegates and senators, the state of the Republic of Afghanistan will make use of every possibility for the cessation of war, the maintenance of peace, and the reconstruction of Afghanistan. It welcomes and supports national and international efforts toward the commencement of intra-Afghan dialogue. I am fully confident that the Afghan parliament, which plays an outstanding role in the political, economic, and social life of the country, can in the future take practical steps in the direction of deepening and realizing the policy of national reconciliation. Allow me, in accordance with Article 86 of the Constitution of the Republic of Afghanistan, to open the eighth session of the Meli Shura with the hope of ending the war and maintaining peace and honor for the people of Afghanistan. I pray to Almighty God for your success and for all the people of Afghanistan. Success comes from God. [applause]

Bangladesh

Aid Given to Burma Refugees; Envoys Briefed

BK2602163092 Dhaka Radio Bangladesh Network in English 1530 GMT 26 Feb 92

[Text] The government has so far sanctioned from its own resources 52 lakh taka for the Burmese refugees now sheltered in the districts of Bandarban and Cox's Bazaar. About 490 metric tons of rice and 240 metric tons of wheat have also been allocated for the refugees. Besides, 1,500 tins of biscuits, 2,000 cartons of powdered milk, 100 cartons of clothes, 257 bags of sugar, 962 cartons of baby food, and 2,000 cartons of other materials have been dispatched for them.

The secretary of the Relief Ministry said France, EEC, and various international agencies, including the World Food Program, have responded promptly to Bangladesh's call for relief for the tens of thousands of Burmese Muslim refugees. More than 80,000 refugees have so far crossed into Bangladesh.

Bangladesh has begun briefing the foreign governments on the severity of the Myanmar [Burmese] refugee problem as a large number of them are pouring into the country. Heads of mission of about 20 countries were given today an account of the worsening problem. Additional Foreign Secretary Farooq Subhan explained to the diplomats the magnitude of the issue as refugees at the rate of 500 to 1,000 are crossing into Bangladesh every day.

Islamic Envoys Briefed

BK2702160192 Dhaka Radio Bangladesh Network in English 1530 GMT 27 Feb 92

[Text] Heads of ICO [Islamic Conference Organization] missions in Bangladesh were briefed in Dhaka today about the problems of the Myanmar [Burma] Muslim refugees fleeing into Bangladesh. A Foreign Office spokesman apprised 14 mission heads about the plight of tens of thousand of the Rohingya Muslims sheltered in Bandarban and Cox's Bazaar districts following their eviction from Arakan region of Myanmar. More than 1 lakh Muslims from Myanmar have so far entered Bangladesh to escape political persecution and atrocities unleashed by the Burmese military junta. Bangladesh has sought international appeal [as heard] to Rohingya refugee problem. Meanwhile, citizens of Kuwait have donated U.S. $300,000 to assist the uprooted Muslim refugees.

Iranian Says Conditions 'Improper'

LD2702100892 Tehran IRNA in English 0640 GMT 27 Feb 92

[Text] Dhaka, Feb. 27 IRNA—The visiting head of Iran's Red Crescent Society [RCS] Seyfollah Vahid Dastijerdi inspected three Burmese refugee camps in border areas of Bangladesh Wednesday.

Speaking to IRNA after inspection, Dastijerdi, who arrived here Monday, said that living conditions in the refugee camps where some 35,000 Burmese refugees are settled are "improper".

Failure to improve the conditions at the camps will expose the refugees to contagious diseases in the approaching hot season, Dastijerdi said.

He said overall relief assistance offered by the Bangladeshi Red Crescent Society has been good and well organized in light of the country's limited facilities.

Dastijerdi added that Iran will airlift blankets and tents to the the Burmese refugees who have fled Burma following the worsening of situation in the country.

Since arrival the Iranian official has discussed the plight of the Burmese refugees with President Abdur Rahman Biswar.

Country Establishes Diplomatic Ties With Ukraine

BK2702154892 Dhaka Radio Bangladesh Network in English 1530 GMT 27 Feb 92

[Text] Bangladesh has established diplomatic relations with Ukraine, the second largest republic of the former Soviet Union.

India

Extension of President's Rule in Kashmir Approved

BK2702125292 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 1230 GMT 27 Feb 92

[Text] The Rajya Sabha today approved the extension of president's rule in Jammu and Kashmir for another six months from the 3d of next month. The house adopted a statutory resolution to this effect by a voice vote. Earlier, Mr. S.A. Salaria of National Conference withdrew his amendment on an assurance by the minister of state for home, Mr. N.M. Jacob, that efforts will be made to normalize the situation in the state. Replying to the brief debate, the minister said that the government will pursue

an action plan in the state, which will include firm measures to check infiltration and overall economic development with the people's involvement. Mr. Jacob assured the members that elections will be held in the state once normalcy is restored.

In the Lok Sabha, intervening during a discussion on the statutory resolution, the minister for communications, Mr. Rajesh Pilot, appealed to all parties to rise above political considerations to resolve the Kashmir problem. He said a united political approach alone can solve the crisis.

Narasimha Rao Elected Congress-I President

BK2702150292 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 1430 GMT 27 Feb 92

[Text] Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao has been unanimously elected as Congress-I president. The returning officer, Dr. Balram Jakhar, made the announcement in New Delhi today. He said Mr. Narasimha Rao's election is unopposed as all the 54 sets of nomination papers, which were found in order after scrutiny, had proposed his name. The last date of filing nomination papers had expired yesterday. A large number of prominent persons, including central ministers, were present when the announcement was made.

Iran

Envoy Contests UN Claim of Rights Violations

LD2702153892 Tehran IRNA in English 1427 GMT 27 Feb 92

[Text] London, Feb. 27, IRNA—The Islamic Republic's ambassador to Geneva, Kya Tabataba'i, has responded to a report by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights special representative in Iran, Professor Reynaldo Galindo-Pohl, which points to "weaknesses in human rights observations in Iran".

Addressing the 48th session of the Commission in Geneva, Tabataba'i began by taking issue with the report's claim that Iran engages in "excessive use of the death penalty".

Acknowledging that "any number of capital punishment is too high" the ambassador explained Iran's dilemma in reconciling this conviction with the reality of "a deadly social menace" threatening both the fabric of society and taking the lives of innocent people.

Iran is the main transit route of narcotics from Asia to Europe, through which specially equipped and armed drug merchant convoys pass, distributing their lethal cargo.

Tabataba'i reminded the session Wednesday that international drug traffickers are engaged in an actual war inside Iran, "killing en masse border guards, drug enforcement officers and even civillian bystanders."

It is this drastic situation, said Tabataba'i, that Professor Galindo-Pohl has failed to appreciate.

The findings in his report, if deemed positive, will be considered by the UN Commission with a view to discontinuing its monitoring of the Islamic Republic.

With this in mind, Tabataba'i asserted that: "Regardless of the facts, each segment of Chapter IV of the report is bound to end with a negative observation, sometimes artificial and even contradictory to the body, to enable the report to purport to the lack of sufficient progress."

Tabataba'i said that a number of recommendations made by the special representative a year ago were adopted rapidly by the Iranian Government. Others, requiring technical and legal preparations had to pass through the necessary draft stages before reaching the level of legal and constitutional debate, a time consuming process in any given parliamentary system.

Nevertheless, maintained Tabataba'i, Galindo-Pohl's report "chooses to look at this process...without recognising the requirements of time which in any other case would have been presumed and taken for granted".

Where previous recommendations have been successfully implemented, the ambassador observed in the report the introduction of "new subjective elements to question the achievement."

He gave the example of last year's recommendation that books no longer be subject to prior authorisation. While this recommendation has already taken effect in Iran, not only is it repeated in the latest report but it is also accompanied by the dictate that "the prior examination of books and forms of artistic creation in general should end." The application, said Tabataba'i, of "a new and highly subjective concept of self-censorship".

The ambassador went on to cite several examples of human rights achievements in the Islamic Republic, in line with recommendations made a year ago by the special representative, all of which have been interpreted by Galindo-Pohl's report to suggest that "no appreciable progress" has been made.

Ambassador Tabataba'i ended his statement by affirming that Iran would continue to underline the fundamental flaws in the Commission's process of ensuring the realisation of human rights "to help achieve a more productive and principled approach in the vital area of universal protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms."

* Reports of Nuclear Weapons Program Denied

92MI0236A DIE WELT in German 27 Jan 92 p 5

[Article by Amir Taheri: "Iran Starts New Major Nuclear Project—Military Objectives Denied/Hunt for Experts From CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States)"; quotation marks as published]

[Text] The mullahs ruling Iran have relaunched the nuclear program that Ayatollah Khomeyni put on ice in 1979 and has remained there ever since. It envisages a $4.2 billion investment, divided among various plants, over a three-year period. The new budget, which takes effect on 21 March, the start of the new Iranian year, already allocates 1.1 billion dollars for this purpose.

The decision to revive the Iranian nuclear program has strengthened concerns in Western capitals about Iran's capacity to implement a military nuclear program. According to Western intelligence sources, the mullahs' revolutionary leadership has already sent several "head-hunters" to the republics of the former Soviet Union to recruit nuclear scientists and technicians. In some cases, salaries exceeding $11,000 are reported to have been offered. These, at any rate, are the figures quoted by London's SUNDAY TIMES citing British intelligence sources.

According to sources close to Iranian President Rafsanjani, such reports were unfounded. The same sources stressed that Iran was not pursuing military objectives. "We just want to revive a branch of scientific research that no country that wants to be taken seriously can afford to neglect," said Homayun Vahdati, an Iranian scientist presumed to be in charge of the major project. "We should like to acquire the technical know-how and the industrial facilities required to manufacture nuclear weapons, just in case we need them. This does not mean that we currently want to build them or that we have changed our defense strategy to include a nuclear program."

The doubts about Iran's nuclear intentions were raised by the country's sudden decision to insist on the full implementation of a contract signed with France in 1973, when Iran bought an 11.3-percent share of the French-controlled European uranium-reprocessing plant, Eurodif. The contract entitled shareholders to a share of output.

The French believe that, because no nuclear plant is in operation in Iran, Tehran is procuring and storing enriched uranium for military purposes. Iranian sources continue to deny this, insisting that Iran merely intends to complete the plants already under construction, and that the building of two new nuclear power plants, for which plans were drawn up before the revolution, also forms part of the major project.

The United States has recently voiced concern over the possibility that Iran might purchase nuclear material and technology from the republics of the CIS [Commonwealth of Independent States]. It is even reported that Tehran has already bought quite large amounts of enriched uranium. The International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna has reported that Iran is in "close contact" with many Soviet scientists. To date, however, these sources are unable to confirm that former Soviet scientists have already been recruited by Tehran.

Aqazadeh on Plans for Increased Oil Production

LD2702210792 Tehran IRIB Television First Program Network in Persian 1530 GMT 27 Feb 92

[Text] Mr. Aqazadeh, the petroleum minister, who is visiting Khuzestan province to plan an increase in oil production for next year [beginning 21 March 1992], took part in an interview with reporters today. He said necessary conditions have been prepared to increase production. He said: If the Islamic Consultative Majles agrees to make up the National Oil Company's budget deficit during the first six months of next year and if that sum is handed over to oil-producing regions, then we will be completely ready to increase production.

He added: With the completion of the reconstruction work on the Nasr platform in the Persian Gulf, that platform, which currently produces 30,000 barrels per day [bpd], can increase its production to 86,000 bpd next year.

On the level of oil production for next year, the oil minister said: According to plans next year's average production level should reach 4 million bpd, which would be around 500,000 barrels more than this year's production.

Tehran Militant Clergy Publication Criticized

NC2702153992 Tehran BAYAN in Persian Jan-Feb 92 pp 28, 29

[Unattributed commentary: "Confidential Propaganda"]

[Excerpts] The Tehran Militant Clergy Association, which is preparing for the fourth term of Majles elections, recently took a new step by publishing a magazine, CONFIDENTIAL BULLETIN!, which is sent to the Friday imams and in which the association says what it wants to say and spreads what it wants to spread.

The publication, in the form of a newsletter, is signed by the political unit of the Tehran Militant Clergy Association, and its so-called "confidential" nature gives it the pretext to write whatever it wants.

One section of the newsletter discusses the insults aimed at political rivals, while another consists of lies, not very well hidden between the lines.

The publication led to many protests, including an article in SALAM on 24 Dey 1370 [14 January 1992], entitled "Confidential Bulletin!," which cited some of the newsletter's accusations against the newspaper. [passage omitted]

Deputy Speaker Bayat wrote to Mahdavi-Kani, secretary of the Tehran Militant Clergy Association, protesting the newsletter's insults and lies. Part of the letter reads:

"Since I assume that you are familiar with Koranic and ethical purports, and would not read such false material, I ask: What kind of people would publish a bulletin in the

name of the Tehran Militant Clergy Association, of which you are secretary, and would insult personalities who were confirmed by the imam, may his soul be sanctified, and to whom you yourself have delegated various duties? [passage omitted]

Some of the association's members want more Majles seats at any cost, even if it means sacrificing the true clergymen and the true followers of the imam, may his soul be sanctified, and inflicting blows on Islam and the system.

You will not allow this to happen. Thus, it seems that you, Your Excellency, must clearly express your views to defend the system's prestige and that of the Islamic revolution and to preserve the sanctities of the genuine clergymen, the supporters of the oppressed, and the defenders of the ideas of the imam, may his soul be sanctified."

BAYAN reserves the right to take steps to expose this magazine, its lies, and accusations more fully.

Pakistan

No Chance of Inviting Najibollah to Talks

BK2702121392 Peshawar THE FRONTIER POST in English 27 Feb 92 pp 1-2

[Text] Islamabad—The government of Pakistan does not have access to the list of invitees the UN mediator on Afghanistan Benon Sevan has prepared or was preparing for the proposed Afghan assembly but Najibollah does not stand any chance of being invited. This was stated by the foreign ministry spokesman here on Wednesday. Here it may be mentioned that the assembly is expected to meet in April in a third country.

According to the spokesman, Najibollah was unacceptable to a broad segment of the Afghan people. He said there was a virtual unanimity amongst this segment that he should neither attend such an assembly nor be a part of the transitional government in Kabul.

To prove his contention the spokesmen referred to what he called "three important points" of the secretary-general's report which dealt with the exclusion of "controversial personalities" from the implementation of his 5-point proposal. He listed these points as follows: 1. controversial Afghan personalities will not participate in the intra-Afghan dialogue; 2. such personalities would not take part in the interim Afghan government in Kabul in place of the present regime; 3. from the day one of transition period there will be total transfer of executive power from Kabul regime to the interim government.

Answering a question the spokesman said he was not in a position to say who among the mojahedin would be treated as controversial to be omitted from the Afghan assembly and the interim government. Sevan, he noted, was already holding consultations with various Afghan parties, groups and leaders to seek their cooperation and Pakistan fully backed his efforts because it had wholeheartedly committed itself to the implementation of the UN proposal, including the convening of an Afghan assembly.

His attention was also drawn to the statement of the minister of state for foreign affairs, Siddiq Kanju, of January 21st in which he had stated that Pakistan would try to persuade the hardliner mojahedin to attend the Afghan assembly and was asked what happened to those efforts, especially in the light of the latest statement of Golboddin Hekmatyar rejecting the UN plan and saying his party would resist it.

The spokesman replied that the efforts were continuing and "it is our hope that they will give a positive response to our efforts".

"What will you do if the response is negative?" he was asked. "We will cross the bridge when we come to it", he answered. However, he made it clear that Pakistan's policy was that whatever decisions the Afghan people took should be free from outside interference.

Asked what was the reaction of the Central Asian republics to the UN plan, he said the Kazakhstan president had already supported it and one would assume that other five republics would share the Kazakh view.

A correspondent sought the spokesman's comment on Mr. Sevan's recent statement that during his discussions with Central Asian republic leaders in Tehran they apprehended a spill-over of ethnic tension from Afghanistan to their republics, P`kistan and Iran. In response the spokesman said if the concern of Central Asian republics leaders was genuine that all the more underlined the urgency of finding a solution to the Afghan problem.

"No comments" was his sharp reply when a newsmen asked him to comment on the planned visit to Kabul of federal minister for labour, manpower and overseas Pakistani to Kabul. The same was his reply when another correspondent asked him to get his reaction to the decision of prominent social welfare figure of Pakistan Ansar Burney to make a trip to Kabul. The spokesman said Burney was a private citizen and his visit would not change the official Pakistan policy on Afghanistan.

To a question about PIA's [Pakistan International Airways] trial flight to Tashkent by overflying Afghan territory, the spokesman said he did not know whether or not this took place under any agreement between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The spokesman uttered "no comments" for a third time when his comment was sought on a newspaper report that the PIA's missing planes had been hijacked to Kabul and that its passengers were being kept there in a detention camp.

Minister on Kashmir, Nuclear Issue, U.S. Ties

BK2702144892 Islamabad PTV Television Network in English 1400 GMT 27 Feb 92

[Text] The National Assembly today adopted a motion expressing its gratitude to the president, Mr. Ghulam Ishaq Khan, for his address to the joint sitting of parliament. Winding up the debate on the presidential address, the federal minister for law and justice, Chaudhary Abdul Ghafoor, refuted point by point all the objections raised by the opposition and said the IJI [Islami Jamhoori Ittehad] government would uphold the supremacy of law and would spend every penny for the welfare of the masses. He compared the performance of IJI and various People's Party regimes and proved that the PPP [Pakistan People's Party] plundered the national wealth, violated the Constitution, ridiculed the national institution, and conspired to weaken the democratic institutions. The law minister said today the opposition is talking of democracy, but their hooliganism during the presidential address is a black spot on democratic history of the country.

In his speech, the minister of state for foreign affairs, Mr. Mohammad Siddique Kanjoo, refuted remarks by the members on the foreign policy. In his point-to-point rebuttal, Mr. Kanjoo outlined the government's policy on Kashmir and Afghanistan issues, Pakistan-U.S. relations, and the country's nuclear program. He reiterated Pakistan's position on Kashmir and said the Simla Agreement does not prevent Pakistan from moving the United Nations to implement its resolutions for a free and fair plebiscite in occupied Kashmir. Similarly, he said, there has been no change in the country's policy on Afghanistan. He said Pakistan supports the UN secretary general's formula for a political settlement as well as his efforts for an intra-Afghan dialogue in this regard. Mr. Kanjoo also told the house that Pakistan will not recognize Israel.

The minister said Pakistan's nuclear program is purely for peaceful purposes. On Pakistan-U.S. relations, the minister said Islamabad will continue to strengthen these relations without compromising its dignity and honor. Those who took part in the debate included Minister of State for Overseas Pakistanis Mian Mohammad Zaman, Mr. Khurshid Shah, Maluvi Siddique Shah, Haji Bahroze Khan, Mr. Qamar Khaled Yunus, Mr. Hasan Bizenjo, Mr. Mahmood Khan Achakzai, and Sardar Farooq Ahmad Khan Laghari. The house will now meet on Sunday [1 March] evening.